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844 enclosure. This is done to protect the woman from indiscreet
787 onlookers. Should there be enough bush to hide her, mats are
843 not used. A big wooden mortar is given to her to lean against during her pains. The whole place is called by a special term *fukwen* or *busaken* (the nest). Should the birth be difficult, the divinatory bones will probably be consulted and the woman will be removed to another place, inside the hut or somewhere else.

844 The baby may be born without any help, but as a rule the midwives consider it their duty to submit their patient to a *long and painful manipulation*, to a regular kneading, performed with the hands, sometimes even with the feet, in order, as they say, to obtain the expulsion of the child and of the after-birth all at once. They sometimes succeed in this feat ! They also often hurt the mother severely. The midwives think that they must be very rough, and have no pity at all on the poor woman. Sometimes the mother loses all her natural feelings in this painful process. I have heard of cases of her refusing to let the child come to the light, biting her helpers, running away. Hence perhaps the attitude adopted by the midwives. The mother must not *fahla ñwana*, viz. break down the child, a technical expression to designate unhappy births.

During the whole labour, it is taboo (1) for the mother to eat or to drink anything ; she would kill the child if she did so. Of course no man must attend the birth ; neither must girls come near. A newly married woman may be allowed to enter the enclosure in order to "be taught." It is also forbidden for the female relations of the woman, her sisters, even her mother to come *fukwen* ; they might be ashamed if their relative behaved badly and "broke her child." They will not come till the following day, when they hear that everything has gone smoothly ; then the father will kill a hen for them.

(1) We translate by taboo the Thonga word *ylla* which means everything prohibited. I beg to give the following provisional definition of this term, which will be found from the first to the last page of this book : Any object, any act, any person that implies a danger to the individual or to the community and that must consequently be avoided, this object, act or person being under a kind of ban. As often as possible, I shall add the explanation which Natives give of these taboos.

844 846 As soon as the child has made his appearance one of the midwives ties the *umbilical cord* (likabana) near the navel and cuts it about three inches from it. The little sore is anointed with a kind of fat ; the bit of cord remaining with the baby is attended to with great care : it generally falls off at the end of the first week, and this is the signal for the end of the period of confinement.

The after-birth, the *placenta*, is also looked for with much anxiety : it is called *yindlu ya ñwana*, the "house of the child," or *hlalu*. When it is delayed too long, the midwives begin to fear "because the blood which is inside has not all come out and will kill the mother." In the Khosa clan, should the placenta not come at once, the woman is told to stand on her feet, her body half bent forward, and all the midwives begin to move their index fingers from right to left, emitting at the same time the following sound : tswi-tswi-tswi-tswi. This is said to help the placenta to come. The placenta is generally buried deep behind the hut on the spot where the birth has taken place ; but some prefer to bury it inside the house, fearing the dogs might unearth it, which is taboo.

The child is then washed with water. This water is thrown away as being polluted by the blood of the birth, which is taboo.

553 787 *Naming the child*. On the day of birth or on one of the following days the child receives his name (bito). There are four principal ways of choosing this.

1) Often the parents give their offspring *the name of a chief* as Musongi, Makasana, Muzila, etc. It flatters their vanity !

2) But frequently the parents like to recall a name of the old times (pfusha bito dja khale), the name of one of the ancestors, because it is a good thing to remember them. They go so far as to consult the bones. A name is proposed, and if the bones in falling do not give a favourable indication, another is tried till they feel sure that the die "has spoken" (1).

553 608 3) Or it may be that somebody asks the favour of giving his

(1) The Christian Natives like to ask their missionary to choose the name, perhaps for a similar reason.

551 for girls and boys. *Nhwanin* is a girl's name, as it means "girl" and *Nwandjise* a boy's name as it means "boy" (1).

553 881 787 All these birth-names are abandoned later on, generally at the circumcision school, or at the age of puberty, in the clans where the custom of circumcising has disappeared; boys and girls then choose new names. Men and women who undergo initiation adopt a new name. So do those subjected to the treatment for possession; these take the name of their pretended possessor when he has made himself known. I refer the reader to Appendix II for further information regarding Thonga names.

845 *Premature Birth.* When a child is born prematurely and is very small and delicate, he is wrapped in the leaves of the castor-oil plant and put into a big pot, which is then exposed to the heat of the sun. This is a true incubator, and the treatment is said to be attended with success (Tobane).

845 848 *Protracted Births and Illegitimate Births.* There would seem to be no relation between these; but to the Thonga mind, on the contrary, a protracted and difficult birth proves that the child is not legitimate. This conviction is so strong that when a woman knows that the child which she is going to bear is not the son of her husband (nuna) but of a lover (mbuye), she will admit this secretly to the principal midwife, in order to spare herself the pains of a difficult birth, as it is taboo to bear a "child of adultery" hiding the fact: it would cause the mother untold suffering.

Therefore, if the delivery lasts too long, the midwife will begin to have doubts as to the legitimacy of the child. The first thing she will do is to send word to the husband. He knows what it means. He takes in his *shifado* (2) a little of his *semen*, 845 848 291 mixes it with water in a shell of sala (the big round fruit of the Strychnos) and the woman drinks it. It may be that then the child will "feel his father," if the husband is really his father, and that this will bring the birth to a prompt conclusion; but

(1) I know of an exception to this rule. The son of the Mabota chief was named Nhwanin, a girl's name, in order to deceive the malevolent powers which had killed his brothers and sisters.

(2) See Annexure I at the end of the volume in the collection of Latin notes written for medical men and ethnographers.

1 [See p. 616 in these categories or IN 116 -- Analyst]

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845 848 if this result is not attained, it is a proof that the child is really illegitimate and the midwife will force the woman to confess her guilt and the name of her lover. Should she have had many and hide the names of some of them "the womb will refuse" (khuri dji ta yala) and the birth will be possible only when the confession is complete.

848 787 Should an illegitimate child be born without this delay, he will come to the light with his hands closed and refuse to take the breast. This will give the midwife an opportunity of extorting a confession from the mother. These women practise a special kind of divination : they take a broken pot, put pumpkin seeds into it and place it on the fire. If the seeds, instead of burning to a cinder, explode with a noise, it is a proof that the woman is guilty. Each explosion means a lover, and all their names must be revealed. (Tobane.) This confession is strictly private. The midwives will consider it a professional duty not to divulge the secret to anyone, even the father. But the mother must confess, as it is absolutely necessary that the true father of a child be known on the day of its birth.

848 837 789 It is taboo for the lover of the woman to come to the door of the hut after the birth of the illegitimate child as long as the umbilical cord has not fallen off. The child would die. Even later on, should the mother be sitting on the threshold of the hut with the baby in her arms, and the man pass along the street in front of them, one of the midwives will go (has she not heard the confession ?) and take between her fingers a pinch of sand from the footprints of the lover, and, without a word, will throw it on the fontanella of the baby. If the husband happens to be present, he will know by witnessing this act that he is not the true father. I do not think he will be very angry. The child is his and, if it is a girl, nobody else will "eat the oxen !" For him this is the main consideration !

845 847 As regards the birth of twins, we shall study later on the strange customs which accompany it : in olden times one of the children was killed ; except in such a case, no child is ever put to death wilfully on the day of its birth.

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grandmother, by name Mishidohi, who had an adult son and had had no other child since, prepared light beer and other appropriate food and succeeded in secreting milk in her own breast ; so the child was saved !

A child during these first months of its existence is regarded as a very weak creature. "I mati !" i. e. "It is nothing but water !" Hence perhaps the curious idea that a baby, just like a new born animal, is able to swim, at any rate it cannot be drowned : it floats on the water. When a woman carrying a little child on her back crosses a river and is in danger of being swept away by the stream, people shout to her from the shore : "Untie the 'ntehe' and let the baby cross. Think of yourself, the little one will follow all right." They say: "Psa yila, it is taboo that a baby should sink." Note the curious use of the word "yila" in this sentence.

### 3) Dentition.

As soon as the child has cut the two lower and upper incisors, the mother takes a white bead (tjambu) and ties it to one of the child's hairs above the forehead. This white bead is said to help the other teeth to come out normally. If this precaution were not taken, the child would not become intelligent ; he would shiver instead of smiling ; he would bring forward his lips and his tongue to prevent the air from getting into his mouth ! When all the teeth are duly cut, the bead is removed and thrown away *talen*, viz. on the *tala*. The *tala* is the ash-heap, the place behind the hut on which everyone throws ashes and dirt. It plays a great part in the customs of the Thongas and other South African Bantus.

The teeth (tinyo-mènyo) of the children are called figuratively *hobe*. The *hobe* (pl. *tihobe*) means the grain of pounded maize which is white and very similar to a tooth. Hence the expression : "A humi hobe," "he has got out a grain of maize," employed to indicate the cutting of the teeth.

When a child cuts his upper teeth first, it is a bad omen. In the Northern clans and especially amongst the Ba-Pedi, it is a great taboo. At his death the child must be buried in wet soil.

787 Amongst the Ba-Ronga the ill-omen is not considered so serious.
782 Later on, when the child loses his first teeth, he must not
856 let them fall out hap-hazard anywhere. He must take the fallen tooth, go to the ash-heap, put his finger into the hole and say : "Kokwa, kokwa, ndji hwe hobe !" (Grandfather, grandfather, give me a grain of maize !) Then he throws the tooth over his shoulder on to the ashes and goes home without looking backward. Should he look backward, his grandfather (the spirit of the departed ?) would not give him a new tooth (1). This custom is no longer taboo and is disappearing.

856 When a younger brother cuts his teeth, they are considered
163 as pushing away or pulling out the teeth of the elder, as the younger brother comes into the world, as a rule, three years after the elder.

As regards *hair*, the first cutting is accompanied by the following
302 custom : the mother sprinkles some drops of her milk on the
856 forehead and on the occiput of the child ; then she cuts his hair and throws it away in the midst of thick grass. When she cuts her own hair, she always leaves a lock on both sides of the head for the amusement of the child, till he is able to walk.

853 Nursing women very often anoint themselves with ochre. This is said to be in order to prevent their husbands from having relations with them.

These rites are not considered as very important. But there are three others which are most punctiliously observed, and which divide the nursing period into three subperiods : the presentation to the moon, after three months, the tying of the cotton string, after one year, and the weaning ceremonies at the close of the period.

### 4) The presentation to the moon (ku yandla).

821 The appearance of the new moon is always received with cheers by the Ba-Ronga. The first person who sees it shouts :

(1) Comparative Ethnography : I remember quite well that, when I was a boy, we were told in Neuchâtel that we must not let a broken tooth get lost, lest it should be found by a dog and a dog's tooth would grow in its stead !

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764 775 two levels, the higher, the large hole, gives access to the smaller, the circular ovoid grave. The first is called *the square* (hubo) of the deceased, the second is *his hut* (yindlu or shinyatu). He will dwell in the hut, but come out from it and sit in his square underground, just as he did when living in his village (1). (Elias.)

764 787 When the grave has been duly dug, the diggers call the relatives to inspect their work, and show them that their deceased relation has been well cared for. The lower grave, being excavated in the wall of the higher, forms a kind of vault. It seems as if it were considered necessary that the earth which will protect the head should not be disturbed. When all the mourners have come at the call of the diggers, it sometimes happens that the vault of the grave falls in. This is a very bad sign. The cause of the accident is this ; either the person who has bewitched the deceased is present or, amongst the assistants, there is one who has been guilty of " matlulana " against him (2)! The grave is a *mondjo*, a magical means of divination.

## III. *The burial.*

764 761 The diggers may be four in number, but they are generally only two ; the master of the mourning (nwinyi wa nkosi), who is the brother next to the deceased, and another younger near relative, for instance a son. Both must be married, because married people alone can get rid of the defilement of death by the " lahla khombo, " which we shall explain later. Should an unmarried son be asked to undertake the work of burial, he

(1) In some clans of the North there is only one hole and no excavation at the side. But what I have described here is the rule amongst the Ba-Ronga, except where civilisation has already modified the old custom.

(2) On this point Mboza and Elias did not agree. Mboza said that the falling in of the grave can only be caused by the presence of the wizard who killed the deceased. Elias asserts that the same accident happens if one of those present has *tjemakenya* the deceased, viz. crossed his way, that is to say has had sexual relations with the same woman as the deceased. (This is matlulana). As the hut of the deceased knew this man, so his new hut in the ground recognises and reveals him !

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765 consequence of the death. If it be the hut of one of the subor-
596 dinates, the roof is simply lifted off and thrown away into the
787 bush.
766 Another very significant rite in connexion with the closing of the hut is accomplished on the death of the master of the village. A branch is cut from the tree of the village, the tree which was revealed by the divinatory bones as the one near which the headman had to build (See Part II Ch. II) ; half of the branch is placed across the great gate of the village, which is then closed and another gate opened, at some distance, in the fence ; the other half is put over the door of the crushed hut.

765 There seem to be great variations in the performance of these
428 ceremonies everywhere. I believe, without being able to vouch for it, that when two family gatherings take place during this last period of the mourning, the first is held to proclaim the new master of the village and the second to distribute the inheritance amongst the heirs-at-law. At any rate these two important acts take place at the gatherings. As the inheritance consists mainly of live stock — human stock, the wives of the deceased, I shall describe the adjudication when treating of the fate of widows.

## 2) Family rites in the Northern clans.

765 A month after the burial, there is a first gathering of the grave-
574 diggers. They are invited by the widows to a beer-feast. This beer is called : "the beer of the hyenas," as the hyenas also dig graves! No equivocal compliment is intended, the widows merely meaning to thank these men for their services.

765 In the northern clans, *yindlu a yi yili*, the hut is not taboo.
782 It can be slept in again after the five days of the Great Mourning. The plaster of the doorposts is repaired, and a new crown is put on the top when the hut again finds an owner (1). The feast of the

766 (1) The hut of a leper alone is considered irremediably tabooed as the sufferer is buried in it. They dig a hole into which he is pushed by means of sticks. The roof is crushed down over him.

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783 765 575 787 of mourning women sitting on the main road, prudently stops and makes a long detour to avoid the place... What is done at this meeting ? One of the widows makes an incision with a knife or a bit of glass in the skin of the new member of the society, in the inguinal region on the left side, "where the husband was resting." If the blood flows freely, it is a good sign. The women are satisfied ; they say there was a good understanding between husband and wife ; if the blood does not flow it is a bad omen. Then one of them lights a little fire with a handful of dry grass ; this grass has been torn from the roof of the deceased's hut. A little excrement from a cock (not a hen!) is then thrown into the fire, and the widow must expose both hands to the smoke. Afterwards she must extinguish the fire with her own water. Should she be unable to do this, it is a further proof that she has not been faithful to her husband and that she has killed him by her adulteries. These rites are very similar to the first circumcision rites, the incision performed recalling the ablation of the foreskin, and the exposure to the smoke, the jumping over the fire. These are great taboos. Evidently they are initiation rites, accompanying the passage from one condition to another. Why does the ceremony take place on the main road ? Because later on the contamination of death will attach itself to travellers passing that spot, and the mourners themselves will get rid of it in this way.

783 765 575 292 After that, the company returns home. The other widows take every bit of clothing from their companion, and tie a reed or a palm thread around her waist with some broad leaves attached to it. With this scanty garment, they bring her home. She walks surrounded by them. Someone warns the men to leave the road as they are not allowed to see the procession. They hide themselves in their huts. The widow is led to her hut, the hut of the great wife which has now been uncrowned. She must accomplish *the last crossing of the hut*. Entering through the door, she shouts loudly : "My husband! My husband! You have left me alone! What am I to do ?" Then she goes out, not by the door but by the hole which has been made in the wall to carry the corpse to the grave. Behind the hut her friends are waiting for her and give her back her old clothing, which has been

787 village," must remain in it and belongs to the younger brother (1) 595 who becomes the master of the kraal. The second goes to the 428 second brother, the third to the third, the fourth to the *ntukulu*, 768 viz. to the son of the sister of the deceased. The fifth will then 604 become the wife of one of the sons of the deceased. This may appear shocking, and is really shocking even to the ideas of the Natives ; but let it be remembered that she is the youngest of all ; she was taken when the father was already old, and the first son is perhaps older than she. As regards the elder wives, the first and second especially, no one would think of keeping them [825] for the son! Incestuous relations are very rare amongst the Ba-Ronga. Even in this case, the feelings of both parties are more or less respected. The men advise the son to begin to play with the young widow, to ask her jocularly for tobacco, and he gradually accustoms himself to consider her no longer as a mother (mamana) but as a wife (nsati).

587 Of course the general rule is apt to be very much altered 595 according to circumstances. Should the deceased be the youngest 428 of the family, his elder brother may inherit the first wife. But 768 this is not the regular procedure.

The distribution having thus been decided on, the sisters of the deceased call the widows and say to them : "You so and so, you shall give food to so and so (phamela manyana)." But then the struggle begins. One of the widows, being old, may altogether refuse to have anything to do with any of her brothers-in-law. She may say : "I am taking my young son as a husband" which means : I do not want to be the wife of anybody. Or she will say : "I choose the big tree of the village where my late husband has built his hut." This answer may mean two things. Either I do not leave this kraal and I will stay here without a husband ; or, on the contrary : I consent to be the wife of the man who becomes the headman of the village, viz. the eldest of the younger brothers. Another will say : "I love my *ntukulu* so and so." Should, however, the first wife desire to go to a man who does not

(1) Amongst the Ba-Ronga, an elder brother of the deceased cannot inherit a widow. It is taboo. He is a father to her, not a husband. He sometimes takes the lead in the discussion, having no personal interest in the matter. (See Part II).

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final fate will not be known before the last and most important act : the adjudication of the inheritance.

f) *The day of the adjudication of the inheritance.* This is a most typical ceremony prepared for with great care, because the day is full of surprises and dangers. Every precaution is taken to avoid misunderstanding, and to bring the mourning to a peaceful and satisfactory conclusion. It is winter time ; the mealies have been collected from the fields of the widows, the small cobs called *makunula* have been set carefully apart, as they have to be used especially to prepare the beer for the feast. The council of the family is again assembled and decides that the time has come. The divinatory bones are consulted. Should they be favourable, the ceremony can take place. The bones are again asked a number of questions : Who must take the mealies from the granary and put them in the pot to soften them in water ? (first operation of native beer making). A newly married woman who has had only one child is chosen by preference. Then it is asked how long this softening must continue ; who is to shout her *mikulungwane* to accompany the work ; who will have to get the mealies out ; which woman must give the first blow in the mortar to pound the softened mealies, etc.

All the relatives assemble in the mortuary village. One year has elapsed since the death, and the bitter feelings of mourning have passed. Nobody will miss the feast, certainly not the *batukulu*, viz., the nephews, sons of the sisters of the deceased. Some may be disappointed this day, but one of these nephews may return home richer than when he left! Most of the relatives arrive before the great day, to help in the preparation of the beer. When the woman designated by the bones has given the first blow, all her companions start at once pounding with vigour : "Che-ghe-ghe-ghe," and they sing songs of mourning. This is one of these songs, and a very significant one :

Hi rilo, hi rilo! Hi ta ku yini ku we, Hosi ndjina ? —
We are weeping, we are weeping! What shall we say to thee, King!

This king is without doubt Heaven, the more or less personal being who kills or gives life, and whom we shall often meet with in these pages.

361 546 264 476 he or she has finished the meal, will have eaten a little of all that has been cooked on all the fires. It is impossible to imagine a more perfect communism than this as regards food! I myself witnessed this custom of the evening meal in Spoon Libombo's village in Rikatla. Amongst the inhabitants of the kraal there were two blind male adults, the wife of one of them being half blind herself ; the wife of the other was an old woman who could hardly till a few square yards of mealies and ground-nuts, and keep the birds and the hens away from them. Spoon's wife and the wife of another man of the village alone were healthy and able to work normally. So the whole burden rested on their shoulders, as the share the other women could take in the feeding of the men was necessarily small. However I never heard Spoon grumble ; being the headman, he made it a point of honour that all the people dwelling with him should have enough to eat. Everybody who has lived with South African Natives has admired their wonderful readiness to share any food they may have with those present. Even children are much superior in this respect to White children. I attribute this virtue to the community of food which reigns in the Bantu village, and which is certainly one of the most attractive features of Kafir socialism. Village life has not taught the Thongas merely bad habits.

## B. MOVING A VILLAGE AND FOUNDING A NEW ONE.

621 754 596 Large kraals similar to the one shown in our illustration were more numerous in former times than now. It is rare to meet with such a number of huts and so many people under one headman. Why ? Because, say my informants, the superstition of witchcraft has considerably increased in later times. Suppose the wife of one of the younger brothers should [784] die ; the divinatory bones reveal that this death is due to a witch ; they go so far as to designate one of the wives of the headman as guilty. No common life is any longer possible. The widower will move elsewhere and build a fence around his

621 754 596 own huts to protect them against would-be-witches. In this way many villages are broken up by fear of witchcraft. Generally speaking the Thonga village cannot long remain of any considerable size ; it tends to fall to pieces.

But there are other causes which may destroy the village and the idyllic life of the small community. The death of the headman, and lightning striking the village, are the two main causes which may bring about this event.

765 596 621 787 *Death of the headman.* There is a mystic tie between this man and the social organism which is under him. Should he die, the village dies also... It is not abandoned at once. The whole year of mourning will elapse before the moving. But as soon as the widows and property have been distributed, the successor of the deceased will go and found his own village and the old one will remain a ruin (rumbi). Should any one else die, his hut will merely be thrown into the bush and the village will not be abandoned. But should these deaths increase, then the divinatory bones may order the place to be deserted, as it is defiled and dangerous.

821 756 787 621 If *lightning* strikes the hubo, it is a very bad omen. The medicine man who has the power to "treat the place struck by lightning" is called in. Should he be able to exhume from the ground the mysterious bird which causes lightning, or at least the coagulated urine which it has deposited, and which is called Heaven (See Part VI), the people are allowed to stay. But if he does not discover it deep down in the soil, the village must move, as the presence of the mysterious power of Heaven inside the circle of huts would bring disaster. This is a taboo.

621 787 596 Another cause of moving is the *exhaustion of the gardens.* When the fields are "tired" (karala) and do not produce sufficient food for the inhabitants, they leave the place and look for pastures new. In that case the bones will be consulted. Sometimes, even, the village may be transported elsewhere for the sole reason that the people are tired of the place and want to change. If the bones confirm their wishes, they will move.

621 596 *The founding of a new village* is the occasion of most interesting and characteristic rites, which afford us a new [illegible]

621/396 nature of that social unit, the Thonga *muti*. I shall give the sequence of these rites first in the Northern clans, according to the description of Viguet, and secondly amongst the Ba-Ronga, according to Mboza.

## I. *In the Northern clans.*

621/787/784 1) The headman goes first to examine some spots where he would like to build. He *breaks small twigs* from various trees and brings them home.

833 2) The bones are consulted and help in *making a choice*. The twigs are placed on a mat one after the other. When the stone of the *kuwe* (see Part VI) falls in a certain way in front of one of the twigs, this shows that the tree from which it has been broken is the one near which the hut of the headman must be built.

3) Building material is collected. When everything is ready to proceed to the construction of the huts, the headman goes with his principal wife to the spot chosen. They leave the old village for ever ; they must not return to it any more. In the evening they have *sexual relations* in the new place and in the morning they tie together some wisps of living grass. Next day all the people of the old village must come and step upon this grass. This rite is called to *tie the village* (boha muti).

621/595/784/834 4) Then begins the period, of about one month, called *buhlapfa*, time of moving, which has its laws. Two great taboos dominate it : 1) Sexual relations are absolutely prohibited. Should any one transgress this law, he has sinned gravely against the headman ; he has stolen the village (yiba muti). The headman will be ill, perhaps paralysed. The guilty woman will also be punished : she will not be able to bear children again ; she will be "tied by the village" (bohiwa hi muti). The culprits have "crossed the way of the master of the village" (tjemakanya). Strange to say, the headman himself is bound by this law. He must have no relations *with his younger wives*, because the village belongs to the principal spouse. Should such a transgression be discovered, the work

621 10) Having closed the village in this way, she *performs a sacrifice.*
595 She sips a mouthful of water from a tumbler, spitting out a
782 portion of it (phahla) towards the people ; then she washes her hands, and throws a little of the water towards them in order *to give them* the village. This act is accompanied by the following words : "Be not tied by the village! Bring forth children ; live and be happy and get everything. You gods, see! I have no bitterness in my heart. It is pure. I was angry because my husband abandoned me, he said I was not his wife ; he loved his younger wives. Now, this is finished in my heart. We shall have friendly relations together..." The prayer being concluded, the headman goes to the main entrance, pushes the thorny branch aside, and opens the village.

621 11) The last act is the *khangula*, the *inauguration ceremony*.
574 Beer is prepared, neighbours are invited and they all drink together, the neighbours coming *to see the new village* (ku bona muti).

As regards the old one, when the moving has been accomplished through the back door widened for the purpose, one of the inhabitants closes the main entrance with a branch. Hence comes the expression which is applied to a village all of whose inmates have died, and which has, on that account, disappeared : "Those people have all died and there was not even one left to close the gate."

## II. *In the Ba-Ronga Clans.*

621 The sequence of rites for the removal of a village is very
787 much the same as in the Northern clans.
824 1) The headman examines some spots and consults the bones :
765 "Must I built at such and such a tree ?"

2) When the tree has been designated, he goes to it and places at its foot his furniture (nyumdju) and his instrument of worship, his altar, (a pot, a jar, see Part VI). The altar may be placed at the main entrance later on, if the bones so order it. As already mentioned, there will be a mystic relation between him and that tree. He must never cut it down. If any of the branches should be

643 857 However, specially appointed persons watch over him and report of his well being to his father. His youthful playmates are taught to respect him ; he is surrounded in his games by a miniature court, from which he chooses his favourites (tinxekwa) ; some of his companions act as counsellors and reprimand those who do not treat him with due respect. They play at court... also at soldiers ; the juvenile troop wage war with the wasps, and also with the boys of the adjoining villages.

643 787 777 751 782 When the child reaches boyhood, the bones are consulted, and sacrifices offered in order to ascertain from the gods whether it be well to take him to the capital. Should the answer be in the negative, there is nothing to do but wait. When the dice declare the propitious moment to have arrived, the transfer is effected and the boy taken to his father. This is a great occasion for the counsellors who have watched over the boy and who thenceforward supervise his education. They feast themselves well (ba fumisana), kill goats, perhaps even an ox, and offer a sacrifice to proclaim to the gods the return to the capital of the heir to the throne ; to his ankle is tied the astragalus of a slaughtered goat, as a protective amulet.

643 881 836 At puberty the boy undergoes, in the same manner as his companions, all the ceremonial rites usual at that period. The principal doctors of the country treat him, in order that henceforth he may be a man (ba mu yimisa a ba wanuna), having full right to enter into the sexual relations of gangisa (p. 97). Care is taken, however, to attach to his person comrades of riper age, who will prevent him giving way to excesses, (suka banhwanyana la' bakulu ba ta mu gema, ba mu sibela ku kula), which would arrest his growth and render him small and feeble. He thus lives in relative continence, participating in the play and in the work of boys of his own age, and looking after the herds. At times he gives a feast, when his father happens to have presented him with an ox with which to make merry.

643 588 595 Now we see him arrived at manhood, at the age when the Blacks take a wife. If his father is still living, the young man is not allowed to marry officially. He may certainly lobola, viz., contract regular marriage in the usual way, and possibly

643 301 them. But they were disappointed in their hope : Shiluvane kept both the ritlatla and the power and bequeathed them to his son, Muhlaba, as we shall see. Legends are current about the ritlatla. It is said to be able to move of its own will. "This piece of metal is indeed a wonderful thing," wrote a young Nkuna, to me "because when it is buried in the soil, as black people are in the habit of doing with their treasures, a piece of iron must be put inside it to prevent it from going away; if this precaution is not taken, the ritlatla may leave the place where it was and go somewhere else. In the space of one year, it may go as far as the Masetana spruit (about one mile)."

643 Another royal property of the Nkuna family was an *elephant's tusk*, which vanquished enemies had brought as a token of their submission.

643 302 787 In Nondwana, the old chief Papele who preceded Maphunga and lived in the middle of the last century, wore a *kind of chignon* or bun made by plaiting his hair, which was a sign of royalty (shifoko). But this custom has passed away. There was also *a long stick* which was kept exposed to the smoke of the royal fire in the sacred hut of *nyokwekulu*, which I shall describe presently, and which was called *ntjobo* and also *mhamba*, viz., offering; this was evidently of religious value to the clan, and was taken outside when the army assembled. It possessed the power of becoming invisible to enemies. Moreover this magical stick was very useful because it warned the clan when some danger was threatening. The ntjobo was then put into a fire; if it did not burn, this showed that the clan had nothing to fear from its enemies ; if it burned, it meant that the clan would be attacked and defeated. Then another stick would be prepared and put into the fire with the hope that it would resist it.

643 778 We shall speak in Part VI of another sacred *mhamba* which most of the Thonga clans possessed, made of the nails and hair of the deceased chiefs in the Tembe clan, and of the dried skin of their faces in the Shirindja clan. It was used as a means of propitiation in national calamities. In the Khosen country, the chief also possessed the *mhamba*. This was a mysterious object which the clan had always possessed, from time immemorial, from the beginning

643 789 The royal drug, having been burnt, is reduced to powder and this powder is poured into the calabashes. The forked branch is planted in the sacred hut, which I shall shortly describe, and the calabashes hung upon it. Each sub-chief receives a calabash and takes it to his kraal, where it will help the district in which he reigns to perform the *luma* ceremony. But the greater part of the powder remains at the capital. There it will be used not only for the luma, and for the sprinkling of the warriors (see Chapter IV), but also for two other purposes : 1) for the protection of the country by means of the wooden pegs ; 2) for the filling up of the magical horn.

1) *The wooden pegs* (timhiko). A certain day is fixed for planting the forked branch in the house where the great medicine is kept. Then the doctor, accompanied by some members of the royal family, steals out secretly during the night and goes to the cross-ways, to the strategic points on the borders of the Mazwaya territory. It is taboo for anyone to meet with the party. He plants wooden pegs, and smears them with the powder. As soon as they have been smeared, they become invisible. No one can see them nor tear them out except Godlela. They do not rot. White ants do not attack them. The country is fenced by them.

Should there be any dispute as regards the boundaries of the country, Godhlela will be called. At once the pegs which were invisible appear ; they come out as much as a foot above the ground. If a hostile army was approaching, it will turn back at once, seized with fear at the sight of these pegs.

789 825 787 2) *The magical horn*. The remainder of the powder is mixed with a special kind of honey, the honey made by the small black bee called *mbonga*. This bee makes a large spherical nest deep in the ground. Natives have a number of superstitions regarding it. They say the mbonga honey may be eaten by anybody, but it is only members of certain families who can see the nest and dig for it. For other people it is invisible. (See Part VI.) The Ngwetsa family, in Rikatla, was one of the favoured ones! It must be said that the hole through which the mbonga bees penetrate into the soil is in truth very small and escapes the notice

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga



789 of most people! This honey comes from below. It is a hidden,
823 a mysterious thing. A little of it is added to the drug and the
787 mixture is poured into a double horn, viz., two horns whose large ends are firmly fixed to each other, the point where they meet being carefully covered with dung, which acts as glue. A hole has been made in the upper horn and the drug is introduced through this. It is a great means of divination. When war is imminent, the nyokwekulu begins to ferment, and exudes through the hole : "It knows all about war." So the country can prepare for it. No wonder that this powerful medicine is preserved with superstitious awe and the greatest care.

643 A place of honour is reserved for the magical horn in the
595 hut of the first wife of the chief. In the middle of the hearth
372 a perpetual fire burns ; it must never be allowed to go out ; it
824 is taboo. The wood used for it must be that of a tree found on the sea shore, and called ntjobori. The Makaneta sub-clan must furnish it regularly. It is taboo to take embers from this fireplace, which is called the royal fire, the medicinal fire (ndjilo wa buhosi, wa muri). Should the principal wife let the fire go out, then Godlela must be called on to light it again, rubbing together two sticks of a shrub called ntjopfa. The fire produced by burning this shrub is considered dangerous. It is taboo to cut its branches or to use them for the purpose of warming oneself ; the genitalia are said to swell when this law is transgressed (See Part IV). But Godlela does not fear ; has he not his drugs to protect himself ? He can and must use ntjopfa to re-light the nyokwekulu fire, and he will be given a good reward for his work! The ntjobori, in burning, produces an abundant smoke which leaves a deposit on the horn, on the forked branch and on all the calabashes containing the provision of powder.

643 The queen Mimpanyanhoba who was in charge of the
372 nyokwekulu had no sexual relations with the chief on that account.
595 I do not know if absolute continence is always enforced on the
784 keeper of the sacred fire, as was the case for the Roman Vestal Virgins. But I have been told by Mboza that this woman prevented her co-wives from coming near her hut ; it was taboo.

643 784 356 The grass of the roof of this hut must never be removed, though it may rot owing to the rains. It is taboo. One simply puts a layer of new grass over the old one, a thing which is rarely done in the case of ordinary roofs.

643 184 722 In case of war, should the clan be obliged to leave the country, a special little hut is hastily built in the bush and the precious medicine is deposited therein. There is no fear that the enemy will take it, either Whites or Natives, because this hut also has the attribute of invisibility. This happened during the war of 1894 (1). In the case of the *mhamba* of the Tembe and Zihlahla clans it is different; the man who keeps it must run away with it and with the chief.

643 789 Such are the laws of the mphulo. This great medicine may certainly be regarded as a part of the regalia, and the most important part. It is, for the chief and sub-chiefs, a means of strengthening their authority, as will be seen in the description of the luma rite. On the other hand the mphulo is a collective possession, the powerful magic means by which the clan resists its enemies or conquers them. It occupies the very centre of the national life.

789 726 643 787 In the Manyisa clan the war-medicine is called *mabophe*, and is kept by a man called Chikiza, who belongs to the Ntjeko clan, not to the royal family. He is said to have inherited it from his forefathers. The medicine however belongs to the chief. It is administered as follows. The *ñanga* prepares small heaps of wood on the road, pours a little of the drug over them, sets fire to them and the warriors tread on the embers and extinguish the fire with their feet. This makes them invulnerable or at least protects them against fatal wounds. When they are ready to start for battle, the bones are thrown, and give the following intimation :

643 789 726 "Do not kill the first enemy you meet with, but catch him alive, be it a man or a woman, and bring him to the chief." The chief, accompanied by some indumas, must stab him outside the royal kraal ; the body of the deceased enemy will then be cut open, and

(1) In the Nondwane the nyokwekulu is still kept by the heir of Maphunga, Magomanyana. The new chief, the usurper, tried to find it, but Godlela refused to give it to him. Thus Mubvesha has no *mphulo*.

789 726 the fat collected in order to mix it with the war medicine, the flesh being left to the dogs to eat and destroy.

643 789 237 In some clans, chiefs possess *other personal charms* which are very much dreaded and called *psitjemba*. So, in the Maluleke clan, each of the children of the ancient chief Mashakadzi received from him one of these psitjemba. It consists of a part of the skull of a child, the top of the head, where the pulse is seen beating at the fontanella. This has been smeared with the vitreous humour taken from the eyes of lions or elephants, and powders made from the skins of wild beasts. The possession of this charm gives the chief a supernatural power. If, being irritated with you, he invokes his gods by sucking it and emits the sacramental tsu, he can call on any wild beast he likes to kill you... He has sacrified with the psitjemba ; you will die!

643 787 825 Some chiefs of the Northern clans used to *swallow one of the stones* found in the stomach of a crocodile. It is said that crocodiles, when cut open, are found to contain a certain number of stones, as they are supposed to eat one each year, when the rainy season comes on. One of them is chosen and smeared with special medicines and swallowed by the chief. Natives firmly believe that this stone remains in the body of the chief, and that it is "his head, his life" (Viguet). When it is passed in his stools the first time, this is a premonitory warning. When it occurs a second time, it is a clear announcement that the chief is about to die. So chiefs can always know when their time is near. In other clans the crocodile stone is replaced by what is called *ndjalama*. Amongst Nkunas this word designates a kind of bright copper button, which the Pedis of the Palaora mine used to make and sell. But ndjalama also means large sized beads. Whatever it is, some chiefs swallowed the ndjalama and were warned by it of their death. This object, as well as the crocodile stone, is taboo for subjects to swallow. They would die. It is "buloyi bya hosi" — "the magical power of the chief."

643 619 On account of these powerful and dangerous charms possessed by them, chiefs of different clans regarded it as a taboo to stay in each other's company ; they were afraid lest they might be killed by the magical power of their colleagues. Maphunga

681 When goats have damaged somebody's garden, there is no
685 fine to pay. The shepherds are whipped and the matter is
643 thus concluded. Should the father of the boys, however, take their part and protect them with his weapons, he will be summoned to the tribunal of the chief and have to pay a fine of £ 5 or two or three goats.

643 Thonga Natives who have but a few head of cattle, are
231 accustomed to entrust them to the care of neighbours possessing
686 a large herd, in order to spare themselves the trouble of finding herding boys. There are some laws regulating this matter. If the owner of the cow, or the pig, or the goat, gives money in advance to the master of the large herd, all the calves, pigs, and kids, which may be born revert to him. But if he has not paid anything, the master of the herd is entitled to choose one pig out of the first litter ; or he can keep the third or fourth calf or kid. If it be a hen, one of its chickens will belong to the man who took care of it. Should the owner forget to remit the due reward, there will be trouble (pongwe). When he goes to take his cattle back, the master of the herd will keep one head for himself, and, if a dispute arises, both will go to the chief, at least if the matter is important, if the animal in question, for instance, is an ox.

If an ox incorporated with another man's herd dies, the master of the herd will inform the owner in order that he may go and dispose of the meat. Should he be living too far off, the ox will be eaten on the spot and the skin will be sent to the owner.
231 Suppose the master of the herd pretends that the ox is dead, but
685 has only put it with another herd, and sent a skin to the owner to deceive him, it is a case of theft, which will be judged as such.

### 3) Criminal cases.

684 *Adultery.* Our tribe punishes adultery very severely indeed,
787 at least when the woman is married. The fine is a full lobolo.
837 (See page 197.) Amongst the Nkunas if the accused man denies his guilt when questioned indoors, the bones are consulted, or even the magicians who practise the "vumisa" divination. (Part

682 627 procedure. They are in advance of many tribes. The same cannot be asserted when dealing with witchcraft!

*Witchcraft* (Buloyi). To the Thonga mind this is one of the 754 greatest crimes which a man can commit. It is equivalent to 683 assassination, even worse than murder, as a dim idea of anthro- 787 pophagy is added to the simple charge of killing. A wizard 694 kills human beings to eat their flesh. We shall study the conceptions of *buloyi* later on (Part VI) from a psychological point of view. Here it is mentioned only in as far as it gives rise to judicial cases. This particular crime being committed in great secrecy during the night, and in most instances even unconsciously, the Bantu tribunal uses two or three magical methods for discovering it. These *methods of inquiry*, which civilised nations have long ago abandoned, are :

1) *Divination by casting bones.* The objects used in our tribe for this purpose are the magic bones, the astragalus of goats, antelopes, etc, and shells, which I intend to study in a special chapter. When they have designated (ku ba, to beat) the wizard or witch (noyi) who has killed such and such a person, they are consulted a second time. If they confirm their verdict, the relatives of the deceased go to the chief and lodge their complaint. The accusation becomes official and is now in the hands of the tribunal.

2) The chief sends the plaintiff and accused to the magician who proceeds to the *divination by questioning* them and working himself up into an ecstatic condition (vumisa).

683 695 824 787 754 3) Should the accused be again designated and should he deny his crime, he may request to be submitted to the *ordeal*, viz, the trial by the solaneous plant called mondjo. If the drug intoxicates him, his guilt is confirmed for the third time and the tribunal will condemn him. The punishment for *buloyi* is death, either by hanging, or by empaling, or by drowning in the river, if the wizard was in the habit of perpetrating his murders by sending crocodiles to kill his victims.

[177 681] Nowadays Native chiefs dare not put to death suspected witches. Since the Ba-Ronga have been under the jurisdiction of the Whites, the *death penalty* has been abolished. On the other hand, under

643 and Part VI). — To protect and to prolong his life, diviners
754 sometimes call together the whole clan in order to discover and
787 eventually arrest those who might bewitch and kill the chief. This
789 gathering is called *nyiwa* (See Part VI). — As for rain making, it is in the hands of the proper rain doctors (Nkuna) or is done by the ceremonies of *mbelele* (Part VI). — He is not held responsible for public calamities. — If his bodily or mental powers fail, the tinduna discuss matters in his stead and he is not deposed.

643 Chiefs are never worshipped during life time. After death,
769 they are deified for their own family, who worship them, but not for their subjects. — They are not supposed to turn into wild beasts after their death. — The custom of appointing mock kings does not exist. Only on the death of a chief can one of his relatives be nominated to take his place, and watch over his property until the adjudication of the inheritance.

243 their mealies with the small pimples of their tattooing (tinhleke ta Ba-Ronga). If maize is the most appreciated cereal, it is certainly not the most ancient known to the tribe. Owing to its modernity, no doubt, it is not subject to any taboo. It is sown and harvested [252] without any rite. At Christmas time, when the first cobs are edible, people joyfully feast on the new crop. They cook some of them in the ashes, but they allow the rest to ripen and dry upon [626] the stalks. Although no taboo prevents any owner of a field from eating the first mealies whenever it suits him, Mboza asserts that people who have obtained green mealies before the other inhabitants of the village, do not precede them in the enjoyment of this much appreciated food : "It would cause jealousy amongst them." This reason is perhaps at the bottom of the luma taboo (I, p. 394). Moreover they fear lest they might have to share their good luck with all their friends !

243 Next in importance comes the *mabele*, plur. of bele, dji-ma 273 (Ro.), ñwahuba (Dj.), the *millet* or *Kafir corn*. This is the well-known millet which we give to birds in cages, small, round, blackish grains which grow on a stem 3 to 5 feet high, in elongated cylindrical ears. Kafir corn is pounded, or ground, and may be eaten in the form of flour. But its main use is to provide the 243 yeast for the Kafir beer. As already pointed out (I. p. 42) the 825 mabele is one of the oldest cereals known to the Thongas. It is the ritual cereal, that used for the "shimhimbi," the dish offered to the confined mother or prepared for the luma ceremony. Its seeds undergo a certain treatment before being sown : the sub-chief blows upon them after having taken a small piece of a certain root in his mouth ; this root obtained from a kind of juncus found in the mountains, is supposed to have the power of keeping the ants away from the seeds. He distributes the seeds thus treated amongst his people, and every one mixes some of them with his own supply. Men of the reigning family alone possess 243 this root. Later on, when the time for sowing has come, it is 787 taboo for subjects to precede their chiefs or sub-chiefs in sowing mabele. The bones are consulted. Should the "madjuma" fall showing their mouths (see Part VI), it is the answer of the gods. They say: "Yes ! this is the proper time ! The mabele will do well !"

The horoscope is all the more satisfactory if the astragalus of the sheep is in the positive position, showing that the chiefs are happy and prosperous. At harvest time, Kafir corn is subject to the luma taboo, as explained in detail in a preceding chapter. All these rites prove the antiquity of the cereal. 243 787

The *sorghum*, (*maphila*, plur. of phila, dji-ma), is also extensively cultivated all through Thongaland. There are many kinds of sorghum : the *phila* proper, with reddish and white grains, the *timba*, whose stem has a sweet taste and is enjoyed almost as much as sugar cane, the *shikombe*, whose ears are curved, the *ntjyaka*, with a particularly elongated ear and the *djabana* with white seeds. The last has a somewhat bitter taste and is consequently spared by the birds, which are so fond of the other kinds of cereals that people have to stay in their gardens for months together to scare them away. 243

*Rice* (*mpunga*, mu-mi) is met with in a few districts only, notably on the Lower Nkomati, where the tide provides a natural irrigation, and in some depressions of the coast belt, especially near Rikatla. I could not say when it was introduced amongst the Thongas. In Shiluvane, its cultivation was entirely unknown in 1890, when it was brought thither by Lourenço Marques Natives. However a storekeeper told me that rice had been extensively cultivated in the country between 1870 and 1880. As it is subject to certain taboos (see later on) it may be that it is older than one would at first suspect.

In some places another cereal is cultivated, the *likoro* (probably Eleusine indica).

## II. *Vegetables.*

Three Leguminosae play a considerable part in the feeding of the tribe : the ground nut, Kafir pea and Kafir bean. 244

*a) The ground-nut*, (Arachis hypogea), (rumane plur. marumane or tinumane (1) (Ro.), timanga (Dj.), is extensively cultivated,

(1) Rumane (cl. dji-ma) can form its plural either by prefixing *ma* which is the regular way, or by prefixing *tin*, which is exceptional. In the second case, the *n* of the prefix causes the initial *r* to permute into *n*.

323 and, if the result of the firing is good, she will always call the same
777 child on future occasions (1).

787 If all these precautions prove useless, and the woman sees that she is not succeeding, she will go so far as to consult the bones, and, if they so order, she will make an offering to her gods, gods of the father, gods of the mother, or possessing gods (Part VI), if she is a spirit-possessed woman, as the bones may

328

Result of the firing. *Phot. A. Borel.*

787 declare. People will say to her: "You manufacture pots and sell them and do not give anything to your gods: that will not do!" So she will offer a piece of clothing, a coin, etc., at the altar *(gandjelo)*.

323 (1) Meta, the Rikatla potteress has entirely given up the manufacture of pottery of
476 late years. All her pots cracked, because, she said, she was the only woman practising this art in the country. In her former home, everybody made pots and in this way the potteresses "strengthened each other (tiyisana)." Moreover when a pot was heard cracking in the furnace, somebody ran to the hut and collected a little of the dust on the floor and threw it into the other pots, and this prevented them from being spoiled. It was too far for Meta to run to her former home to get the dust—so she gave up her trade! The case of poor Meta is a good illustration of the collective character of industrial pursuits amongst primitive peoples.

On their way back, they had carefully to watch a certain bird called *Jwati*, fish-eater ; if this bird flew in the right direction, homeward, it was a hopeful sign. If it emitted its cry *kwekweru-kweru*, (kweru means at home), or if it settled on the crown of a hut, then the travellers were happy and shouted their joyful *mikulungwane*. On the contrary, if any member of the company had died on the road, another bird, the *magudjwana*, would come and perch on the crown, with a tired air and drooping head... Then there were tears instead of shouts of joy!

These great commercial expeditions were superseded later on by the *trade in skins* which the Ba-Ronga conducted, bartering them in the interior for powder or other European produce. I knew one Native who organised regular expeditions to Bilene, where he bought the skins of civet-cats with which the Zulu warriors delight to deck themselves. Thence he went into the hill country of the Swazis, or Zulus, to sell his merchandise. It was reported that he obtained scores of oxen in exchange for his precious nsimba skins. The last time, however, the venture did not turn out well, and it has not been attempted again.

Native trade, fifty years ago, consisted also in selling *wax*, and *rubber*, and tons of *nkampfi* (mafureira almonds) to the business houses at Delagoa, (the supply of ivory was exhausted years ago), but this trade has fallen off almost entirely. My impression is that Native commerce has greatly diminished during the last fifty years. So the fact is evident that civilisation, which at first gave a decided stimulus to the commercial spirit of the Thongas, has latterly almost entirely destroyed their trade. How has this been done?

One reason for this decrease in Native commerce may be found in the advent of a large number of Asiatics, Banyans from Goa and Bombay, who are past masters in the art of shopkeeping, and who set up in business wherever they consider there is a sufficient population to warrant the venture. Living very cheaply (rice and curry are their staple food), in any kind of shanty, selling at enormous profits, keen at making bargains, these people

821 which is also met with in *nyeleti* (star) and in the names of certain rivers. (I. p. 36.) At the present time there is no trace of worship or of mythological conceptions in connection with it. Natives see in its spots a woman carrying a shirundju basket or a bundle of sticks, but they do not attach to that image more importance than we do when we talk of the man in the moon.

821 527 241 I have described (I. p. 52) how the new moon is received with exclamations of joy : in the villages the first person who sees it shouts : "Kengelekezeeee,"—"the Crescent! the Crescent!" and this word is passed on from one village to another, and dancers rejoice because they will have moonlight to illuminate their feasts! Such is, at least, the reason now given by the Rongas for this custom. There were perhaps other ideas connected with the new moon in former times. — According to a Nkuna informant the day of the new moon is a *shimuni*, a day of rest. It is taboo to till the fields and cut the roots of the trees with a hoe. The moon must be left to become firm (tiyela). It is still tender as a new born child. Destroying winds might 821 blow and hail fall if this taboo were transgressed. — The 787 appearance of the crescent was also carefully examined, says the 828 same informant. If its horns were turned towards the earth, this showed that there was nothing to fear, all the dangers contained in this month had been poured out : "mafumo ma hangalakile" — "the assagais were dispersed." On the contrary, if the horns were turned towards heaven, this showed that the moon was full of weapons and misfortunes. — The new moon is of great importance in the customs connected with exorcism and possession, as every exorcist must undergo the *haza* purification at each new moon (Chapter III). Moreover Thongas, like many civilised people, also believe that some persons at this time have an attack of madness which is called *rihuhe ra ñhweti*, the lunar madness.

772 821 When the first quarter appears, the moon is said to *thwaza*, a Zulu word which corresponds to *tjhama* in Thonga, and is very much used in the terminology of possession. Eight days later, it is said to *basa*, to be white or brilliant ; full moon is said to *sima* or to *lata batjongwana*, to put the little children to bed, because when it rises, it finds them already sleeping on their mats.

I never heard a distinction made between fixed stars and planets. They are all called tinyeleti. The best-known is Venus, which bears many names. Not knowing that the evening and morning star are one and the same, they have given it different names. The evening star is *Gumbashilalelo*, the one which steals the evening meal, because it appears when people are eating it, or *khwekhweti*, the brilliant star, or *Nkata wa hweti*, the moon's husband (as the two are often seen close together) ; the morning star is called *Ngongomela*, or *Khwezu*, and is greatly lauded as the herald of day. It gives the warriors the signal for starting on a war-like expedition : the warriors can easily kill their enemies under cover of the darkness, and the sun will soon appear and help them to complete their victory. Travellers also start on their journey when they see it : the dawn will soon be here ! Lit by its light, candidates for circumcision leave the village of the chief to go to the house of initiation. According to one of my informants (I. p. 75) there is a profound and mystic idea in this custom : Ngongomela announces the day ; so little boys must be conducted by the morning star when they abandon their childhood and all its ignorance to enter the adult life with all its knowledge. It leads them from darkness into the light ! So Venus plays a great part in Thonga customs. It is the great star. Notice the feminine suffix *eti* in one of its names. It may have been personified in former times. 821 772 881

The *Pleiades* are the only constellation which bears a name in Thonga. They call it *shirimelo*, the one which announces the tilling season, because, in fact, in the lands situated in the Tropic of Cancer, it rises in July or August, when tilling is resumed. I have not heard of any other constellation known to the Natives. They have no notion whatever of constellations : their mind does not seem to have tried to group the stars, or to have seen figures of animals, or objects, in the sky ; their imagination in this domain is very poor, and they remain far behind the Oriental nations in this respect. 821 772

*Falling stars* are looked on as a bad omen. When they see one falling towards a certain point of the horizon, Natives think that a Chief must have died in the country towards which the 821 787 789

821 star is directing its course, and they have a formula of incantation
787 to get rid of the misfortune attending this phenomenon. They
789 say : "Thu! Thu! Nkulunkulu ndjuwee, famba psa ku u nga fa u ku bi." — "You great thing, go away alone (without me, leaving me behind) and die and disappear entirely." This is more an imprecation (shiruketelo) than an incantation. The syllable *thu* indicates, and accompanies, the emission of a little saliva. It is different from the sacramental *tsu*, employed to invoke the spirits of the ancestors : it is an insult. It is spitting *at* something, not an act of respect and an offering, like *tsu* (1). This is the Ronga formula ; the one used in Northern clans has the same meaning : "*Rura, rura weshe*" (Move, move alone!).

821 *Comets* greatly impress the imagination of the Thongas ;
787 they are called *shimusana*, or *nyeleti ya musana*, the star of dust, or *nyeleti ya nkila*, the star with a tail, and when they appear they also mean the death of a chief. People say : "See ! A chief has died, but they have not yet published the mourning" (I. p. 414). The star which is said to have appeared the year of the death of Manukosi was probably a comet. (See Report of the S.A.A.A.S. 1905, Vol. III, p. 232.)

772 These few superstitions and observations comprise all the Astronomy of the Thongas. The sidereal world is almost entirely outside the range of their preoccupations.

## III. *Cosmographic and Meteorological Phenonomena.*

### 1) The Wind.

821 The wind is called *moya*, an interesting word which means
822 also spirit (the human breath and the spiritual part of man), and is applied to the acting, living agent, or to the smell, or taste, of some objects. For instance it is said of an alcoholic beverage

861 (1) They spit at a child who is causing an unpleasant smell, saying to him : "Thu ! u ya tiyela matjimba." — "Go away to ease yourself." Should you do this to a
578 person older than yourself, he will say to you : "What ! you make *thu* to me (wa ndji tjhuka), you want me to ease myself !"

"You see! Stones also grow!" Another Native geologist, who had heard the European story of creation, coming from the Coast, a country of sand and sand only, and visiting the Drakensberg Mountains near Shiluvane, was amazed by the enormous cliffs of the Mamotswiri and gave vent to the following reflection : "No wonder we have no stones in our sandy land. When God created the earth, he used them all to build these mountains!" 823

*Fossils* are rare in Thongaland, where sand covers almost the whole country. There is however in the southern part of the Maputju region an outcrop of cretaceous rock which belongs to the Gault and which contains ammonites, Nautillus etc. Natives call them *nsongo stones* and are very much afraid of them. They say that "these stones with ribs" can walk. They bring bad luck (*xingita*). Should a child pick up one of these fossils and bring it into the village, he will fall ill ; he must therefore undergo a special treatment. 136 823 977

*Crystal* greatly pleases the Natives. It is rare in South Africa. When magicians can secure a white or a black crystal they generally wear it round their necks together with the claws, or teeth, of wild animals, or with their little skin bags which they use as amulets. For this reason I once had the good fortune to be able to exchange a crystal I had brought from Switzerland for one of these charms! 135 301

The *earth* (misaba) is also a great and important thing. First because it is identified with the people dwelling on it, with the clan. *Tiko*, the land, means both the soil and the people. Further than this, the earth is the chief (I. p. 382) ; hence many laws : e. g. the tusk of the elephant which fell on the earth when the beast was killed, belongs to the chief, etc. (p. 57). The most solemn oath is that which is taken with earth (ku funga u hahla hi misaba). Should a man be accused of stealing or of being a wizard, if he puts a little earth in his mouth, says *tsu*, and declares : "I do not know anything about it," those who care for his safety will look for a medicine-man to treat him : it is a *mondjo* (a magical method of divination. See Chapter III). The same thing is done when an oath has been taken by sucking a piece of iron. 823 695 787

A curious superstition regarding the earth is this : after moving from one country to another, you should for some days mix with 823

surrounded with a certain mystery, and this is no doubt why its honey is used in the manufacture of the *nyokwekulu*. Its scientific name is Trigona togoensis, var. Junodi (Friese).

Amongst the *Mollusca*, a great many are eaten : the *Mbatsana* (yin-tin) of the sea (bivalve shells), *Likatla* (li-tin) of the lakes, and the *Hwaru* (yi-tin), oysters of the Tembe shore. The land snails are called *Humba* (yi-tin) ; the big ones (Achatina Lamarkiana) are used as safes for the deposit of pounds sterling and are often buried in the huts ; hence the expression *Humba ya bupfundji*, shell of riches! The smaller ones, resembling our snails (Aerope caffra), are rarer and it is considered a bad omen to meet with them on the road. — "Where you go you will hear cries of mourning!" Their name is *Shikumbakwane*. The slugs are called *Holokompfa* (yin-tin) and the smaller snails, *Shihumbanyana*, diminutive of *humba*.

*Fish* all have names, but having never dwelt in the close vicinity of the sea, I have not learnt them. I know the *Mfungwe* (yi-tin) the fish whose mouth ends in a saw, the *Mangapfi* (dji-ma), the name of a kind of hawk given to the flying fish of Delagoa Bay, the *Nhempfane* (yi-tin) found in the fresh water ponds, the *Ntima* (yi-tin) the barbel, the black fish which must not be eaten by lovers before their marriage (I, p. 107).

*Amphibia*. *Ntlambya* (mu-mi) is the ordinary frog (Rana oxyrhynca) whose young are known and called *Shilungula* ; another black species is the *Rebya* (dji-ma) ; the tree-frogs are called *Shilungwalungwana* (Rappia marmorata and argus) ; the toad *Kele* (dji-ma), Bufo regularis ; the famous Breviceps mossambicus is *Shisana* (I. p. 87) the great warrior of the tales (p. 221).

*Reptilia*. There are many kinds of *Lizards*. The common kind found in the houses, under the verandas is the *Mponondjo* (mu-mi) (Mabuia striata), ; the Lygodactylus capensis, found on the hills, is the *Nkolombya* (mu-mi) ; the little Agama

the hole with their wings to prevent water from inundating the nest. When it lasts too long they quickly go down to close the entrance of the nest ; the water then leaks down the pipe which descends into the interior of the earth. He added : "If a man does not belong to a family which "knows" the mbonga and if he happens to find a nest he will meet with misfortune ; one of his relatives will die. The bees will bring him ill-luck (*ingita*)."

sculeata, which runs on the sand, *Shipyindji* or *Shihonokamahlo*, the one which gazes at you ; the large gheko, Agama atricollis, with a head of which the grey colour can change into blue, *Galagala* or *Phululu* (dji-ma) (I. p. 173) the grey one, which hides itself in dark places, in hollow stems or under roofs is the *Hokokuuma* (dji-ma) (Hemidactylus grenatus) ; it is said that when this lizard sucks at the breast of a human being, it is impossible to remove it, and the only means of getting rid of it is to go and suckle a dog! 136 825

But the most curious lizard of these countries, that which most strikes the Native imagination is the Chameleon (Chameleon Petersii), *Lumpfana* (dji-ma). Herd boys throw ground tobacco into its mouth to avenge themselves for the bad turn it did mankind when it lingered on the road and came too late to bring the message of eternal life (as we shall learn in a moment). It is used by certain magicians to discover thieves. They smear a chameleon with a drug which makes it turn white and then let it go : "Then the thief, wherever he may be, also turns white, and if he does not confess his theft, he dies!" 136 825 789

The flesh of none of these lizards is eaten, but that of the big Varan which lives near the rivers, *Kwahle* (dji-ma), is considered a delicacy. The kwahle is said to be very hard to kill. About *Crocodiles* (*nguenya*, yin-tin) all sorts of stories are told. When one of them has been killed, the contents of its stomach are carefully preserved ; Thongas assert that each year, when the rains begin, crocodiles swallow a stone, so that their age can be known by counting them. These stones are taboo ; for a subject to swallow them is a cause of death, but one of them is chosen, treated with certain drugs and swallowed by the chief to warn him of his death, as we have already seen (I, p. 393). Crocodile stones play an important part in divination. (See Part VI. Ch. III. D). 136 825 262 787

*Tortoises*, whose generic name is *Mfutju* (yin-tin), are eaten and also used in the divinatory art, as we shall see. Some lake tortoises are called *Gamba* (dji-ma) and sea tortoises *Hasi* (dji-ma).

*Snakes* (nyoka, yin-tin) are generally dreaded and considered dangerous, although many kinds are quite harmless. The 825 136

754 magician shuts him in with the dying man in the hut and gives him
774 the following command : "Bring back the spirit which you have
761 taken and hidden somewhere." Some magicians, who are more powerful than the wizards, pretend to be able to find the stolen spirit and so to restore the patient to health. In cases of epilepsy, or of any psychic trouble attended with unconsciousness, when the sick person returns to his senses, they triumph : have they not brought back the soul? But they say that this must be done in haste. No time must be lost!

775 Lastly, the final unsheathing of personality takes place at death. The body becomes rotten, but the shadow goes away and continues its life as a god, shikwembu. The belief in the continuation of life after death is universal, being at the base of Ancestrolatry, which is the religion of the tribe. We shall study the ideas relating to the future life when dealing with the gods.

What Thongas can absolutely not understand is the resurrection of the body. "Mbuti yi fa, yi bola ; homu yi fa, yi bola ; munhu a fa, a bola!" — "The goat dies and rots, the ox dies and rots, man dies and rots!" answers the sceptical Thonga when he hears the story of the resurrection.

On the whole their ideas of future life are not so very different from those of the ancient Greeks, who believed that the human soul went after death to the realm of shadows.

787 *Dreams* are not generally liked by the Thongas. If something
828 they happened to dream really takes place, it "disgusts" them (nyenyetsa). When a man has seen a woman several times in his dreams, especially if she was pregnant, he will consult the bones. If he dreams that he has relations with her, he may go next day and hit her with a stick. He leaves the stick on the ground and goes away without a word. According to Mboza, this is done to get rid of the obsession, and to prevent the dream from becoming reality. That is the reason, I suppose, why a Christian boy once said to his missionary : "I dream of many people, but I keep quiet!" Amongst Thongas dreams do not seem to play the great part which the animistic theory attributes to them in the formation of primitive beliefs.

The Gods of the Bush, Psikwembu psa Nhoba, are also especially dreaded. There is a little song which is sung as a welcome to travellers who reach their home safely : 776 484 533

Shikwembu sha nhoba shi etlele !
Shi etlele, banhwanyana !
Amadikeo-dikeo-dikeo !
The god of the bush has remained asleep !
He has remained asleep, young girls !
Hurrah ! hurrah ! hurrah !

The spirits of the departed who wander about in the bush, not having been properly buried, try to attack innocent travellers. You are fortunate to escape their anger! For this reason they often say to a relative who is starting out on a journey : "Go with your god," viz., the special ancestor-god who can protect you against the dangers of the bush. 769 776 784

I have also heard mention of *Shikwembu sha tihanye*, the god of quarrels. When an offering prescribed by the bones and presented to a certain ancestor-god has not had the desired result, people say : "This god is a god of quarrels. Let us make an offering to the others so that they may scold him." 776 769

### 3) The Abode of the Ancestor-Gods and their Mode of Life.

Ideas on these two points are very confused, even contradictory. Some say that the departed go to a great village *under the earth*, a village where everything is white (or pure, "ku basa") ; there they till the fields, reap great harvests, and live in abundance, and they take of this abundance to give to their descendants on earth. They have also a great many cattle. The place where they live seems to be a kind of Hades or Paradise (1). But it would seem, when we consider the funeral rites, that the deceased, on the contrary, 775 776 787

(1) The Ba-Ila (see Smith and Dale, *The Ila-speaking people*, II p. 119) believe that the ghosts go *Kwiwa*, to the East, to Chilenga, the Creator. But they have the same contradictory ideas as the Thongas concerning the abode of their deceased ancestors. 171

Amongst the Natives of Barotseland, on the Zambezi, it is said that the dead go to Nyambe, the God of Heaven. They pierce the lobe of their ears and make other incisions in their bodies as a sign that they belong to Nyambe. When they die and reach the end of the earth at the great river Walamba (the Styx of the Zambezian tribes) the ferryman who conveys the dead to the other bank looks at them to see if

775 remains *in his grave*. Is not his grave his house (I. p. 137)? Does
776 he not sit on his square, where his mats have been unrolled? Thus
787 the life of the shikwembu seems to be the exact continuation of his earthly existence. That such is the idea is proved by the two bones which represent the gods in the set of divinatory bones : 1) the astragalus or nail of an ant-bear, because ant-bears live in the earth, and come out only during the night ; 2) the astragalus of an antelope, found in the excrement of a hyena ; the hyena ate the antelope, and swallowed the bone, which came to light again ; in the same way the gods have been buried in the ground, and reveal themselves later on. (Compare Ch. III. D.) A third idea, more or less intermediate between the other two, is that the gods reside *in the sacred woods*, and there lead their family life in human form, parents and children, even little children, who are carried on their mothers'shoulders. Mboza went so far as to say that they are married and bring forth children, as children are seen on their mothers'backs. Here again, we find the life of the other world regarded as the exact reproduction of this terrestrial existence.

### 4) The Sacred Woods.

764 These are vast, almost impenetrable thickets, in which the
769 ancient chiefs have been buried ; they are called *ntimu*, (mu-mi)
778 cemeteries. Every clan owns one or more of these burying places. The ntimu is reserved for the men of the royal family, those who have been the owners of the land. They are buried in different sections of the forest, "according to their villages," in such a way that the wood represents separate cemeteries, corresponding to the

171 they bear the marks, and only in that case does he take them to Nyambe (See *Ames primitives*, Th. Burnier, Paris Mission, 102, Boulevard Arago).

The Ba-Chopi believe that their ancestor-gods dwell in rivers. They have no fear of the graves where the deceased have been buried, and even till the ground over them, asserting that the bones alone remain in the earth, the ghosts themselves having departed into the river where they are heard singing, dancing, and playing on antelope horns. When the chiefs make a national offering, they mix the meat with water when they present it to their gods, and the one officiating turns his eyes towards the river when he prays. He places the part of the victim which has been cut out for the gods on the bank of the river, and everybody goes home. The gods come when all have gone and take the offering. It is taboo to remain on the spot and to be seen by them!

769 with. I never heard it said that the gods were in heaven, not-
776 withstanding the Sutho term badimo, which is believed by some to mean those who are above.

### 5. Relations between Ancestor-gods and their living descendants.

769 The apparitions of ancestor-gods in a human form in the
776 sacred woods are not of frequent occurrence. The gods reveal
825 themselves to their descendants by other and more common
753 means; first, by their appearance *in the form of animals*, such as the Mantis (p. 335) or more often as little bluish green snakes called *shihundje* (p. 340). These charming and harmless reptiles are frequently seen in the huts, crawling in the thatch of the roof, or along the reeds of the walls (1). Natives never touch them, thinking that they are some of their gods who have come to pay them a visit. It is taboo to kill them. If a disease breaks out in the village the bones may reveal that some one in the hut has hurt the gods, and a sacrifice will be required in order to appease them. They also appear in the form of the large grey puff-adder (shiphyahla) (2).

769 Secondly, the ancestor-gods communicate with the living
776 *in their dreams*. If some one dreams of one of his dead relatives,
787 he is very much frightened, and consults the bones, in order

769 (1) This is the story which I heard from one of my informants of the Khosen
825 country: All his family was once assembled together for a marriage feast. The people were playing on the village square and enjoying themselves. The old women had remained in the hut, and suddenly they saw two little green snakes crawling along the reeds of the wall. They were much afraid, and at once called the headman. He came in, saw the snakes, and said: "Do not fear! These are our ancestor-gods! They have come to share in our feast."

(2) Describing to me a sacrifice at which he officiated either in September or October 1895, the old priest Nkolele told me as a fact the following story, which I will now quote word for word:

"I myself went into the wood with the offering I had prepared for the gods, and then *it came out*. It was a snake; it was the father of Makundju, the Master of the Forest, Mombo-wa-ndlopfu, Elephant's-Face. He came out and circled round all those present. The women rushed away terrified. But he had only come to thank us. He didn't come to bite us. He thanked us saying: 'Thank you! Thank you! So you are still there, my children! You came to load me with presents, and to

to know exactly what the god desires of him (Viguet). If the apparition was painful, if the god came as an enemy, fighting, the dreamer, when he awakes, will take some tobacco, or a small piece of cloth, and hang it somewhere in the reeds of the wall, near the door, as an offering. Or possibly the god has ordered him to give him something to drink. He will then buy a bottle of ginor wine, and pour a little outside the door; whatever remains he will drink with his companions. If the dream takes place during a journey and the ancestor-god seems to be happy, the traveller will throw some tobacco on the ground when he awakes and say: "I had prayed thee to help me on my road; thou hast come indeed! Help me to go further." But if the ancestor-god has an angry look and tells him: "Why do you not give me a piece of calico print? You have forgotten me"—the traveller will fetch a piece and tie it round a tree and say: "When I return home after making money, I will give thee some."

But the great means by which the will of the gods is revealed is the *set of divinatory bones*, which are cast on every occasion, and are called the "Bula," the Word. Does this mean the Word of the gods? Not precisely, but in most cases the diviner thinks he owes his divinatory power to a dead relative, who used to cast lots himself, and who transmitted his spirit of interpretation to him. Whatever may be the real explanation, the fact remains that it is by means of the bones that Thongas believe they know what their gods think and wish, and this is the reason, as we shall

bring me fruit! T'is well!' — He came to thank us for our chicken. Even if one only kills a chicken, he is quite content. For him, it has just the same value as an ox. It was an enormous viper, as thick as my leg, down there (he pointed to his ankle). It came close up to me, and kept quite still, never biting me. I looked at it. It said: 'Thank you! So you are still there, my grandson!'"

— "But," said I to Nkolele, "what you are telling me, is it really fact, or just fancy?"

— "Undoubted fact! These are great truths! After that I prayed, and said: 'Thou, Mombo-wa-Ndlopfu, the Master of this land, thou who hast given it to thy son Makundju; Makundju gave it to his son Hati; Hati gave it to Makhumbi; Makhumbi gave it to Kinini; Kinini gave it to Mikabyana; Mikabyana gave it to Mawatle... ('Mawatle gave it to me, his son' is here understood)... Look upon my offering. Is it not a beautiful one? And here am I, left all alone. If I had not brought this with me, who would have given you anything? Is it not just so? I ask of thee, my ancestor, I ask of thee all the trees; the palm trees for building, the trunks which can be hollowed out for canoes; and let it be that these trunks shall not fall on the people and crush them, when they go to cut them down, over there in the marsh.'"

787 see, why divination plays such an important part in their life.
769 It is of the utmost importance to know what their gods think
776 and do, as the very existence of the village, and of the clan, and the welfare of every member of the clan depends on them. Is not Lukwembo, Divinity "the power of killing or of making alive, of enriching or of making poor?" Natives believe firmly in these two opposite actions of their gods. They are the masters of everything : earth, fields, trees, rain, men, children, even of baloyi, wizards! They have full control over all these objects or persons.

769 The gods can *bless* : if the trees bear plenty of fruit, it is because
776 they have made it grow (I. p. 414) ; if the crops are plentiful, it is because they forced wizards to increase them, or hindered them
777 from spoiling them (I. p. 396) ; if you come across a pot of palm wine, it is your god who has sent you that windfall (p. 44). When Mboza escaped from the Morakwen battle, one of his relatives exclaimed on his return home : "The gods of Makaneta have still been with you!" (Psikwembu psa ka Makaneta psa ha ku yimelele.) Often when a man has narrowly escaped drowning, or spraining his ankle on a stump which has caught his foot, he will say : "The gods have saved me."

769 But they can also *curse*, and bring untold misfortune on their
776 descendants. If the rain fails, it is owing to their anger ; if a tree
789 falls on you, they have directed its fall ; if a crocodile bites you, the gods have sent it ; if your child has fever and is delirious, they are
753 in him, tormenting his soul ; if your wife is sterile, they have prevented her from childbearing ; perhaps the gods of your mother have done this, because you had not given your maternal uncle the *tjhumba* part of the lobolo, which he has the right to claim (I. p. 267) ; in fact any disease, any calamity may come from them. There are, of course, other sources of misfortune : the baloyi, for instance, or Heaven, and the bones will show who has caused the mischief ; but the ancestor-gods are certainly the most powerful spiritual agency acting on man's life. Hence the necessity of propitiating them by prayers and sacrifices.

782 into the pot, one for the paternal, the other for the maternal gods, saying as he does so :

Fole hi ledji! Tlanganan mi djaha, mi nga ndji hobilise loko ndji djaha fole, mi ku ndji mi tjona.

Here is some tobacco! Come all of you and take a pinch, and do not be angry with me when I snuff, nor say that I deprive you of your share.

Having made his offering, the headman must return to his seat, on the hubo, without looking behind him : this is a taboo.

Another way of gandjela is the offering of a piece of cloth (nturu), which may be tied at the entrance, or to the tree of the village (p. 333). Liquids also are poured into the gandjelo (I. p. 341) : beer, when a beer feast is to take place ; wine, when it has been bought at the neighbouring store ; palm-wine, when the big pot called gandjelo (see p. 43 for the explanation of this word in this particular connection) has been filled, and the precious drink has been brought to the village.

*Occasional offerings* are made, for instance, in a case of *shirwalo* (I. p. 406) when relatives-in-law have brought jars of beer. A little of the beer is first offered to the gods, in order that the pots may not get broken during the return journey. Another case is after a dream, in which the gods have asked for such and such an offering to be made (p. 385).

**Sacramental Offerings or Ku Hahla (Ro.), Phahla (Dj.).**

782 787 These are of much greater importance than the simple ones and also differ from them in two ways, viz., they are always ordered by the divinatory bones, and accompanied by the sacramental *tsu*. The bones are first consulted, and give many indications, e. g., what must be the nature of the offering ; to which god it must be consecrated ; in what place the act of worship must be performed, (in the hut, behind it, at the door, in the square, in the sacred wood, or in the bush). When the ceremony

takes place over the grave the bones reveal whether the officiant must stand at the head or at the foot. (See Chap. III, D. for the consultation of the bones). 782 787

*The Offering of Bitterness.* There is a progressive character in the offerings, according to the value of the gift accompanying the *tsu*. In some cases, all that is given to the gods is the small amount of saliva emitted in pronouncing the sacramental sound. These offerings are called "Offerings of Bitterness" (ku hahla hi shibiti), and form a most curious category. They are generally presented by a headman who is overwhelmed with sorrow, and deprived of everything. "He shows his misery by offering nothing but his saliva. He leans his head upon his shoulder with a look of profound sadness. His heart is bitter! He has nothing! He therefore does not try to win over his gods by presenting rich gifts to them. He wishes rather to gain their blessing by this appearance of abject misery. And they will indeed have pity on him!" (Mboza). This is certainly touching! But this kind of offering, though showing more individual piety than others, must only be made ritually, i. e., by order of the bones. The sacrifice of bitterness may be resorted to when no evil has as yet fallen on the village, as a preventive against misfortune. 782

*The Offering of Charcoal.* When a headman is in great difficulties, (quarrels in his village, disease amongst his people), the bones may order him to *hahla* with a piece of charcoal. He takes an extinct charcoal, puts it to his lips, utters the *tsu* and adds :

Akhwari! i. e. Smoothly! You, so and so. What you want is this. Abupsayi! i. e. Gently! This is fire! This is the mouth of the lion! Let what troubles me come to an end, etc.

*The Offering of Earth.* Earth is the offering of the chiefs, because they are the masters of the soil (I. p. 405). It can, however, also be used by subjects on various occasions. When the bones have not revealed that the disease was sent by the ancestor-gods, when they have not said that it was the work of wizards, then it is caused by "the earth, misaba" i. e. by some unknown people of the land (bhanu-ba misaba). The bones say : "Go and seek the navel of the earth." The navel of the earth is the ant-heap. The officiant then takes a piece of termite nest and *hahla* with it. He 782 787

addresses his prayer to his ancestor-gods in order to be delivered from his enemies.

*The Offering of a Thorn (Mhamba ya Mutwa).* This is also called *ku hahla ka shihlahla*, the sacrifice of the forest. The headman has seen that misfortune has fallen on his village ; all his people die, the village is about to disappear, to become merely a part of the bush. He goes to the forest, picks up a thorn there and accomplishes the religious act by sucking the thorn, and emitting his saliva. Then he returns to the forest and places the thorn where the bones have ordered him.

*The Offering of Contempt (Mhamba ya Litsañwa).* We have already seen a case in which this offering is made. It is a component part of the burial ritual (I. p. 142) and we have called it the rite of the twig. But it can be performed on other occasions also. In certain clans (Nkuna-Khosa, Hlengwe) it does not take place at the burial, but is of common use when someone wishes *to avoid contempt*, to be well received by those to whom he goes ; for instance when he goes to his debtors and fears that they may despise him and perhaps refuse to accept his claim, or when a young man goes to woo a girl and is afraid that she may not look favourably on his suit. The religious act is performed as follows. The officiant cuts a twig of the nkanye tree. We have often mentioned this tree, whose fruits are used to prepare the famous bukanye beer ; it is everywhere regarded as the best of trees, and highly valued. It is dioecious, as we have seen (I. p. 397). The twig must come from a female stem, if a man *hahla* for himself, from a male stem if a woman does so. The officiant bites the extremity of the twig till he has drawn a little of the sap into his mouth ; then he emits that sap together with his saliva, and proceeds to his prayer.

*The Offering of the Fig Tree (Mhamba ya Hlulawumbe).* This tree is called shihlampfana or hlulawumbe. It frequently grows as a parasite on another tree ; or surrounds it, growing close to its stem, and in this way kills it. If a man has enemies, if there are people who hate him, he digs up a bit of the root of this fig tree and uses it in making his prayer. These troublesome persons will be choked, destroyed, just like the stem close to which the hlulawumbe grows. (Hlulawumbe means to overcome others).

On my return from the battle I showed all the army how I had prayed." The old general's spontaneous appeal to the gods on behalf of his country in its hour of supreme danger is indeed worthy of notice, and also furnishes a proof that ancestor-worship is still a living force and has not become a mere matter of ritual amongst those who practise it. This prayer of the Nkuna general, this exclamation of an anguished soul in the presence of a great danger, may be regarded as *verbal magic*, as it is not expressedly addressed to the gods, and the same may be said of the formula employed to cancel an oath in the offering of reconciliation, the mention of the gods being absent in this case also. All these acts, however, are mhamba. They are in reality accomplished with the idea that the gods hear and see what is said and done and will be induced to deliver their worshippers.

The magic character of these rites is most marked in the cases of communionist magic ; those which are classed under imitative magic may perhaps be more properly called *symbols*, or at least some of them (1).

Elias Libombo once came to me and said : "My brother, Klass, died. He was *the mhamba of the Libombos*. Now his younger

(1) But what is a *symbol* in religion, and what is the difference between the symbol and the magic rite? I cannot treat this important subject here in all the necessary detail and length. Let us take only one instance. The offering of incense which took place every evening in the Temple of Jerusalem and which is also widespread in certain branches of the Christian Church is regarded as a symbol. The perfumed smoke which ascends towards heaven corresponds to the prayers of the worshippers, which are thought of as ascending to God and pleasing Him, just as the agreeable smell of incense gratifies the nostrils of the man who perceives it. But in the Hebrew religion it is not thought that incense conveys prayers to God in some actual and magical fashion. It is a symbol. Psychologically speaking this use of incense is probably to be explained in the following manner : The material representation of a religious act (or a religious truth) tends to induce in the worshipper a stronger faith in the efficacy of the act or the reality of the truth. His soul thus finds satisfaction in the performance of the symbolic act through which he feels himself brought into closer communion with his God. It is easy to understand that in the course of the religious evolution, a higher conception of God should have caused the magic act to evolve into the symbol, and that the symbol itself should be abandoned or reduced to a minimum when the idea of God has become perfectly spiritualised and communion with the Father who is in Heaven is realized without any external and intermediary means. A comparison of the great mhamba with the relics of saints or other relics used in certain religions would probably show a similar type of evolution.

Some scientists believe that religious evolution contained a *preanimistic phase*, in which the worship of spirits had not yet come into existence, and in which primitive man employed only magic means to influence the supernatural powers. This

787 brother will be so called." Nkolele, the father of these two men,
793 was the Libombo mhamba before them. This is another meaning of this great word mhamba. Klass was neither a gift made to the ancestor-gods of the Libombos, nor a magic object employed to win their favour, but he was the elder member of the family, the one who was the official and indispensable intermediary between all the Libombos and their gods. For this reason he was a mhamba. This leads me to propose the following definition of the word : *A mhamba is any object or act or even person which is used to establish a bond between the gods and their worshippers.*

Having thus analysed all the elements contained in the Thonga mhamba, we may safely conclude that its spiritual and religious value cannot be denied. Whatever place ritual may hold in the ceremonies of ancestrolatry, whatever mixture of devotional and magic elements may be found in them, the offering is not a mere external gift which appeases the gods by its material value, nor a simple means of coercion which forces them to submit to the will of the worshipper. By means of the mhamba the Thonga really aims at entering into relationship with those powerful spirits who control his life (1).

may be true, but as regards Bantus, they have long outgrown this stage. Even when they have recourse to magic processes in order to influence their ancestor-gods, these have a distinctive character, different from that of the ordinary magic which they practise when they wish to affect the impersonal forces of Nature. Everything done in order to obtain the favour of the ancestor-gods is a *mhamba*, not a *muri*, as I have already pointed out.

782 (1) Religious and magic practices are more or less mingled in Thonga ritual and it
789 is evident that the smaller the degree of magic contained in a rite, the more genuine religious feeling there will be in it. I owe to my Venda informant the description of
755 a sacrifice performed in his tribe for a sick child, where the two elements are combined to an extraordinary extent. It is called *the offering of the goat with clothes* (mbudzi ya u dzwindisa).

A goat is provided. It is placed before a basin of water mixed with certain drugs and forced to drink, to drink till it is fully distended, and dies. It is then skinned and cut open. The large intestine is extracted from the body, and a part of it is cut off and stitched up at one end so as to form a kind of pouch. From each limb a bit of meat is taken, and a provision of the seeds of various cereals, brought to the spot together with drugs. All these different kinds of food are introduced into the pouch, the process of filling it being accompanied by prayers to the ancestor-god. The officiant, whilst proceeding with his task, puts seeds into the goat's intestine with one hand, and, with the other, takes other seeds and places them apart. These he will keep carefully in order to sow them later on. And continually he prays: "Eat your fill and be satisfied, and leave us some for our use." Thus the ancestor-god has been fed, well and duly stuffed. The pouch is then stitched at its other end. But now the ancestor-god must be clothed

we have just studied, they are attributed either to Heaven or to evil spirits or to the winds. The name of the *wutleka* disease is worthy of notice. This word comes from *wutla*, which means to rob, to seize ; wutleka, the qualificative derivative (Thonga Grammar § 196) means the condition of something taken away. This would seem to be a passive meaning, as if the patient had been robbed by some agent. However, Mankhelu explains the term by saying : "The patient has stolen the *rirabi*" — "a wutle rirabi". *Rirabi* is very closely allied to a word meaning stick ; the old doctor says it is the name of the disease. If this etymology be correct the patient would be considered as having taken the disease by a kind of robbery. But Native etymology must always be accepted with caution.

All these names show how unprecise is the pathological knowledge of the Thongas.

2) As regards the *causes of diseases*, Thongas are groping in the grossest superstition. When a medical man wishes to treat a disease, he first tries to diagnose its cause. The Bantu ñanga does the same, only the difference is that he takes very little notice of the physical symptoms. There is no auscultation, no palpation, no examination of the secretions, blood, saliva, or urine, as these are disgusting and must be covered with sand as soon as possible! The great means of diagnosing a disease is the throwing of bones. There are three great causes of disease : the spirits of the gods, the wizards and the makhumo, defilement from death or from impure persons. A fourth less common cause is Heaven. The bones will reveal by the way in which they fall which is the one to be combated.

3) Their ideas of *contagion* are not much in advance of their other pathological conceptions. The two most dreaded diseases in this respect are consumption (lifuba) and leprosy (nhlokonho). *Consumption* is by no means a new ailment due to civilisation, though it has increased enormously since Thonga boys have gone to the towns. A proof that it has been known for a long time is to be found in its great importance in the ritual. To the Thonga mind it is caused by the *makhumo*, i. e., the contamination of death, or the defilement resulting from contact with a woman in

wash himself with it ; or he must take the basin on his knees, suck in a little of this foam between his lips and spit it out in the direction of the four winds, saying *tsu*, evidently as a preliminary means of propitiating the possessing spirits, which will be invoked and entreated to reveal themselves in the following rite. 755

In the case of Mboza, the calabash came as the second phase of the treatment, the first being the drum performance.

### 1) The drum performance (gongondjela).

This extraordinary rite reminds one of the witches' sabbaths of medieval times by the infernal din and uproar through which the possessed will have to pass. However, notwithstanding the external resemblance, it is totally different, having nothing to do with witchcraft proper, and being only a "medical practice" in the eyes of the Thongas. — A strange medical practice, indeed, devised rather to kill than to heal the patient! 755 787

In the first place the bones must be consulted to find out in what spot the sabbath should be held. If the bone which represents the patient falls in the middle of all the rest, this shows that the tambourines, or "tom-toms," must be beaten in the interior of the hut itself. If the bone falls on the outer edge, the sabbath must be in the doorway ; if it falls further to one side, beyond all the others, the treatment must take place on the village square (hubyen) ; if it rolls still further off, and if the astragalus of the roaming gazelle is also separated from the rest, this shows that the meeting must take place in the bush, quite away from the village. If the bones remain silent, revealing nothing, then the throwing will be continued behind the hut, or on the square, until they speak. It is also necessary that the four shells Oliva, and Cypraea, which form part of the set of bones, should fall on their backs, exposing their crack or mouth. This signifies that the possessing gods, the spirits, will come out ; there will be an egress for them, whilst if, on the contrary, the shells fall differently, shewing their convex sides, the diviner will say : "Ma tikarata ntsena" — "all your trouble is in vain :" the sabbath

755 will have no effect ; no means of egress for the gods will be found!
787 (Compare Letter D. Divination). But a way will soon be found to get over this difficulty, and it will not be long before the sabbath is in full swing.

755 In the hut, right in the middle, the patient is seated. Dejected, with downcast eyes, and fixed expression, he waits... Everyone throughout the country knows that to-day, to-night, on the appearance of the new moon, the strange and terrible exorcism will begin. All those who have once been possessed will officiate. The director of the ceremony, the *gobela*, who has been appointed by the bones, holds his tambourine, made of the skin of the big varan lizard stretched over a circular wooden frame. (See Illustration p. 124, No. 9.) In the calm quiet of the evening air the first blow is struck. It reverberates, and is heard afar off on all sides ; it penetrates the thickets and reaches the neighbouring villages, where it inspires a strange emotion, a transcendent delight born of curiosity, malice, and I know not what feeling of unconscious satisfaction. All rush in the direction of the well-known sound ; each one hurries to the hut of the possessed ; all desire to take part in this struggle, this conflict with the invisible world.

They all assemble, some with tambourines, others with large tin cases picked up on the outskirts of the town (tins in which kerosine oil is sold in Lourenço Marques), still others with calabashes, filled with small objects, which do duty as rattles (ndjele, yin-tin) ; and now, crowding round the patient, they begin their hideous din, striking, brandishing, shaking their various instruments of torture with all their might and main. Some lightly touch the head or ears of the unfortunate sufferer. It is a frightful hubbub, which continues, with but short interruptions, during the whole night, or until the performers in this fantastic concert are compelled to stop from sheer fatigue.

755 But this is merely the orchestra, the accompaniment. That
533 which is most essential is the *singing*, the human voice, the *chorus of exorcists*, a short refrain, following on a still shorter solo, repeated a hundred or a thousand times, always with the same object in view, toward which all strive seriously and persistently, namely to compel the spiritual being, the mysterious possessing spirit which

all the people clapping their hands (wombela), to encourage him, as an accompaniment. — The *horns and hoofs* will be carefully kept, and placed on the roof of the hut, just over the door (shiranwin) by which the afflicted one enters, evidently to protect the abode from malign influences. — The *astragalus* will be tied, together with the strips, on the sternum of the patient. — The *bones* of the goat are the objects of special care. They must not be broken to eat the marrow, but burnt in the shade of a large tree, where it is "cool." So the possessing spirit will also be cool (titimela) and not too wild. Sometimes they are preserved in a special pot, and burnt on the day of the hondlola. 755

The period of convalescence then begins. It lasts one year, and is a distinct marginal period, as clearly appears from the fact that sexual relations are absolutely forbidden during that phase, and until the hondlola. It is also, more or less, a period of apprenticeship, as the possessed will become an exorcist himself, if his magical powers become sufficiently developed. He accompanies the gobela everywhere, assists him in his cures, and so learns the art of exorcism. The apprentice will also have to practise the rites of protection, which I shall shortly describe, and which are obligatory during the whole period of convalescence, and even later. 758 834 756

### 4) The final purification of the hondlola and investing with amulets (timfisa).

As we saw, the hondlola, the removal of defilement of disease, is necessary at the close of any illness. So, when a possessed person is regarded as healed, he will have to pass through this rite. It can however only be carried out on the one condition that the possessed husband, or wife, has remained in a state of continence during the period of convalescence. In order to know if they have obeyed this law, a fowl will be placed on the head of the patient. If he, or she, has been continent according to order, the bird will remain quiet; it will not fly away, even should someone approach and pass close by. If it flies off making a great noise, the angry exorcist will also take his leave, saying: 755 758 787

[For the individual whose spirit was possessed — Analyst]

755 "You have sinned and, in so doing, have marred the efficacy of all
758 my medicines (mi honile miri)." On the other hand, if the rule
●787 has been properly observed, the bird will remain quite still, when it will be stabbed with a knife and its blood will be used in connection with the hondlola friction. Afterwards the fowl will be plucked and eaten by the village folk, but neither the patient, nor his spouse, nor the exorcist-in-chief will be allowed to partake of it. Thenceforth the husband and wife are permitted to live together as in the past.

755 The hondlola rites seem particularly complicated in cases of possession. Their sequence was as follows in that of Mboza. 1) He had to pay £ 1 to Nwatshulu, as a reward for his medical attendance. He gave him the money, together with a pot of beer. 2) Then the doctor took his *gobo* calabash, stirred the medicine in order to make it froth abundantly, invoking his gods all the time, and saying : "Awake, you who spit on the road, you, Zulus, who have ears capable of hearing, etc... 3) Then he shouted : "Mboza! Eat!" The exorcised had to kneel down and swallow the froth. 4) The exorcist took mafureira fat, mixed it in his hand with medicinal powder, smeared and rubbed the body of the convalescent, from the knees to the feet, the arms, the chest, the belly, and the head. 5) He cut the nails of the hands and feet with a knife, and also a little of the hair on the forehead, and put the whole into the timfisa bags (p. 471) together with medicinal powder. 6) Then followed the ordinary hondlola friction. A pellet (shibuwu) had been prepared by crushing roots of the *bamhuntane* and *shilewana* trees in a mortar, and a hen had been killed. Mboza sat on a mat and the doctor rubbed his whole body with the pellet. He gathered the *timhora*, the particles fallen on the mat, mixed them with the blood of the hen, and again rubbed the patient. 7) Fresh timhora fell on the mat. They were gathered up a second time. Some were put into the amulet bags, the remainder were made into a ball, which was not thrown away as in ordinary diseases, but carefully placed at the back of the hut, where the forked branch was to be planted.

○●○ Let us remember that, in the case of the exorcised, the hondlola

result if hostile feelings already existed between two persons (1). 754

Jealousy alone is sufficient to give rise to the suspicion even without a word having been uttered (2).

The fact of a woman having lost many children is also a reason [761] for suspecting her of being a witch, as the death of a baby is constantly considered as having been caused by its own mother, who wished "to eat it." The fact of belonging to a family of baloyi is also an indication to the same effect, buloyi being hereditary, as we have seen.

But a mere suspicion is not sufficient to warrant action being 754 taken against the suspected noyi. An objective proof, a piece of 787 convincing evidence is required, and this the magicians are asked to 791 supply. The patient's relatives go *to the diviner* who will cast the bones and discover whether the disease is due to witchcraft or not. This consultation is secret, and is merely preliminary. There are, in the sets of bones employed in Thonga divination, some which,

(1) The evangelist Silas G. was one day speaking to Saul N., an elder of his Church, about Church contributions and said: "So and so does not pay his dues. It would be good to show him his duty." Saul answered: "I do not wonder; that man has a bad wife and you are sure to fail in your duty when you have a bad wife." — "No", said Silas. "Everyone ought to pay his contribution. You, for example, would certainly do your duty even if you had a bad wife!" — "Nevertheless I maintain that a wife who behaves badly takes away her husband's courage. Look at your own case, Silas. Your wife does harm to your work as an evangelist. Did she not say the other day when she saw my baby: 'How fat it is! It is like a pumpkin!'" On hearing these words Silas starts! They are an accusation of buloyi. To say that the baby was as fat as a pumpkin showed that the woman who used these words was ready to eat its body during the night; the evangelist's wife was a noyi! An enquiry was at once started to ascertain if she had really pronounced these words, and the whole little Church was upset. Finally the elder was blamed for having brought an accusation of buloyi, which is forbidden in the Native Congregations, and he resigned his office. The evangelist and his wife "became thin" owing to the mental suffering caused by the insinuation of the elder.

(2) I had amongst my evangelists a very active and intelligent man who cultivated large gardens and was well provided with everything. His neighbours began to suspect him for this reason. He said to them: "We ought not to work on Sundays," and this increased their suspicions. "It is evident", they said, "that *he is not alone!* How does he manage to have such splendid harvests when he does not work on Sundays? Surely he has others to till for him. He takes our backs and uses them to cultivate his big fields. And the reason why he has such wonderful crops is that he has taken our own mealies from our gardens by his witchcraft" — "But," said others, "you cannot complain! Mealies are plentiful in your gardens too!" — "No," answered the enemies of the evangelist. "Though you see mealies in our gardens, they are no longer mealies; they have been taken away by him." They meant that, just as a bewitched person is no longer normal but has been emptied of his viscera, so the cereals had been robbed of their virtue by buloyi.

754 represent the *baloyi*, in particular the astragalus of the reedbuck, or
787 of the duiker, the small antelope which rambles about during
791 the night, just at the time when witches are at work. Should this bone fall in a certain way near the bone representing the patient, or near his amulets, which have been placed on the mat, this shows that his disease is the result of buloyi. The name of the noyi will be sought, and perhaps ascertained, on that first day, but the parents of the victim will never venture to accuse him merely on the testimony of the bones. The next step will be to go to the *mungoma*, the magician who "smells out" the *baloyi*.

The magician employs various means to find out a noyi.

### a) *The Enchanted Horn.*

754 In the Murchison Range there is a magician who possesses an
791 enchanted horn, into which he introduces a short twig smeared with an anti-baloyi medicine. Persons suspected of having killed by witchcraft must try to pull the twig out of the horn. The noyi will be unable to do this, though he may declare, like the others : "I have not killed." Amongst the Nkunas, the magician who has succeeded in finding out a wizard, takes his coat and hangs it on a tree as a trophy.

### b) *The Enchanted Flute.*

When some one dies and his relatives think he has been bewitched, they can call a certain mungoma who "treats the grave" with his drugs. If he thinks that he has discovered the noyi, he gives to the bereaved a small flute, telling him to go and play on it in the neighbourhood. This helps not only to detect the wizard but to punish him ; he will die. This rite is called "to play on the little flute (ku yimbelela shinangana) for somebody."

d) *The smelling-out procedure.*

754 But should it be desirable to ascertain the name of the noyi,
675 in order to punish him (for instance, in a case of death, where
787 nothing remains but to avenge oneself on the murderer), the mungoma will proceed to the *shinusa divination*, the regular smelling-out. This can be done in two ways, either by questioning or by ecstasy.

1) *Smelling-out by questioning.* The relatives of the bewitched come to the shinusa, pay him £ 1, and ask him to find out the murderer. He makes them sit down in a half-circle, and, facing them, begins to put questions to them. They always answer by the word *mamoo*, which means yes, in the language of *bungoma*. Hence the Zulu term *vumisa* viz., "to make somebody say yes," applied to this ceremony. The *mamoo* is cool or warm, doubtful or convinced, and the clever diviner easily perceives every shade of meaning in this perpetual *mamoo*. He is well aware of all the disputes and hatred between the people and, in his investigation, he draws nearer and nearer to the man of whom the consulting party is thinking. Their *mamoo* becomes bolder. The questions are more precise. At last, when he feels himself in agreement with the consultants, the *mungoma* pronounces the name and lets his tail fall. He is bathed in perspiration after the great strain, and remains silent, as if he were indeed infallible ; he has triumphantly "smelt out" the culprit. Next day, relatives of the patient go to the kraal of the noyi, waving branches, dance before him, and say : "So you are killing us!" The accused keeps silent. Then he says : "All right. We shall come to-morrow and also consult our *mungoma*." Both parties then go to another diviner. The performance of "smelling out" is again gone through, and very likely the verdict of the second *mungoma* will confirm that of the first ; the augurs know that they must not contradict each other if they wish to maintain their authority, and the terrible tail falls on the head of the accused. As soon as proof and counterproof have been obtained, the case becomes a judicial one. The plaintiff brings the matter before the chief, who will not condemn until the

754 695 787 guilt of the pretended noyi is confirmed by ordeal, the trial by the famous philter called *mondjo*.

2) *Smelling-out by ecstasy* partakes more or less of the character of the rera nyiwa. All the people have been assembled in the Capital. The chief wishes to collect together all the baloyi of the land. The diviner arrives, decked out with amulets and all the insignia of his power. In his hands he carries his magical

Photo D. Lanoir.

Smelling-out a wizard.

tail, by way of a whip, and an assagay. He begins to dance, the crowd seated all round him, clapping their hands (wombela), and singing a chorus peculiar to the occasion :

Nwashongana khale ! Famba u ya teka, u ya teka, nungoma !
Beautiful dancer of slender figure ! Seek for it, seek for it, diviner !

He goes on dancing ; like Pythia of old he falls into a condition of extreme nervous excitement, ecstasy, inspiration. He brandishes his tail, dilates his nostrils, inhales the air on all sides, as if to smell out the spot from whence the evil influence has emanated, then takes to his heels in a certain direction, the assembly

754 695 787 still clapping their hands and singing. He approaches a hut, enters, and triumphantly plants his assagay in one corner. A hole is dug in that spot and — just where so and so places his wooden pillow when retiring to rest for the night — there are discovered a small gourd full of blood, packets of suspicious objects connected with enchantment, and perhaps a snake. It is quite possible that the diviner may have previously hidden these articles; nevertheless he carries them exultingly away; they are the wizards' weapons, the "bloods" (tingati) which they throw over their victims at night.

The shinusa returns to the village of the chief, who is veryangry, and orders him to go and show these objects to their owner. Then the magician, making a sign to the crowd to stop singing, will go and throw the articles in front of the occupant of the hut to put him to shame before the whole assembly. The mysterious charms, and the noyi's gourd, must in every case be consumed by fire, and then the sickness and deaths in the village should cease.

### e) *The Mondjo ordeal.*

754 695 As already pointed out, the final and supreme method of unmasking baloyi is the *mondjo ordeal.* This is a legal procedure ordered by the chief, a true method of obtaining information in a criminal case. This custom calls to mind the judgment of God in the Middle Ages (ordeal is derived from "urtheil," judgment); it is practised by the majority of the Bantu tribes, varying from one tribe to another, but everywhere it has the same end in view, namely the discovery of the casters of spells by the imposition of an ordeal which is supposed to be fatal to such as are guilty.

This ordeal is called amongst the Ba-Ronga (as also from one end of the Thonga tribe to the other) *drinking the mondjo* (ku nwa [137] mondjo). The mondjo is a plant of the Solaneae family, probably a Datura, which possesses intoxicating properties. With it a special magician prepares a beverage which is to act as a means of revelation. It can be resorted to by any individual accused of witchcraft, or of any other crime. A woman accused of adultery,

754 The Thonga tribe really suffers from the results of the witchcraft superstition and this explains a curious magico-religious movement which took place in the years 1914-1917, in which the tribe made a serious and touching attempt to free itself from this scourge. The story of "The Murimi Movement" will be found in Appendix V.

I have already explained how I think Government can and must interfere in order to check this terrible superstition. (I. p. 445.) But its eradication will only be possible under a twofold influence, the increase of the scientific spirit, which will conquer and destroy the absurdities of the animistic magical conceptions involved in these practices, and the Christian Religion, the Religion of Love and of Light, which banishes fear and hatred.

## D. DIVINATION.

787 Divinatory practices are extremely common amongst Thongas. Surrounded by so many evil influences, having very little or no scientific knowledge, possessing no notion of a God capable of illumining the path of their life, they try to obtain directions by the various methods of divination which they have invented, and it must be confessed that they have reached a high degree of proficiency in this domain. The anxiety to know the future lies at the foundation both of omens and divinatory practices. Let us first briefly consider the former.

### I. *Omens.*

These are of two kinds ; some objects are ill-omened, they *singita* or *hlolela*, foretell bad luck ; others are favourable and announce happiness and, more especially, plenty of meat!

their idea that wizards certainly exist, since they are even mentioned in the Bible! Of course those who are further advanced see the absurdity of the witchcraft theory, but a great many do not. As a proof of this I may quote this letter addressed by a young convert to his father from Johannesburg: "If the Lord agrees with it, I shall return home in the month of February; expect me that month. I entreat you not to tell anyone, less they bewitch me by preparing (lit. placing) snakes for me (ba ndji bekela tinyoka)."

Amongst the first we have already noticed *falling stars* (p. 309) ; 787
*the snail* (p. 338) : should you meet with it on the road, you will soon hear that one of your relatives has died ; *the stem of cuscuta* (yendje-yendje) ; (1) there are families, however, for which this is not of bad omen, but for other people it foretells misfortune ; *the mbonga bee* belongs to the same class (p. 337) ; the various kinds of *mistletoe* are also of bad omen. So also is the *puff-adder* (p. 340), the *likure* (p. 340), a greyish slender snake : if it blows upon you, or bites you, you will grow thin and turn grey, like the animal itself ; the long-legged bird *shitshinyariendjo* foretells misfortune on the road (I. p. 339) as do also the *buwumati* snake and the *nkangu bird*.

Other objects are of good omen ; the beetle *Eccoptoptera* and the *Mutilla* (p. 336), and especially the beetle *Bombolosi*, belonging to the Curculionidae family, a curious insect which drops to the ground and counterfeits death when touched or frightened ; it is the symbol of riches. Natives hang it on a string at their door ; I have heard of others hanging it in their hair ; but in this case it is said to be placed there to eat lice!

All these superstitions are believed in more or less seriously. But, in order to know their fate and what they must do to avoid misfortune, Thongas have recourse to true methods of divination. Amongst these mantic practices some are simple and some more elaborate.

## II. *Less important Means of Divination.*

1) Amongst these I may mention first the *pshapsha*, which 524
corresponds to our "drawing lots" and is performed exactly 787
in the same way by placing pieces of grass or sticks of different length between the fingers, and pulling out one of them, having

(1) The cuscuta sometimes covers large patches of ground on the sandy hills of 137
Thongaland ; as is well-known, it has a regular root, but afterwards becomes a parasite 824
on the vegetables to which it attaches itself, whilst its stem and root die. This fact 787
has been noticed by the Natives, and has given the cuscuta a special value in their eyes. When they happen to find a plant which still retains its stem and root, magicians make use of these, especially in their exorcism rites. But this stem, which is so rare, is a bad omen for ordinary people.

524 first decided to act in such and such a way if the longer or the
787 shorter grass be drawn. This is more or less a game and is employed mostly by children.

787 2) Another more serious method of divination is the *mondjo*, the enchanted philter, used as a regular means of procedure to obtain evidence in Court (I. p. 443), especially to discover wizards and adulterous women. It has been described at full length in the preceding paragraph.

3) A third is the *divination by ecstasy* which is employed by the magician when "smelling out" wizards. The old men assert that, in former times, there were diviners who could guess anything when in that peculiar psychological state in which the subliminal faculties may develop to a marvellous extent. Hendrick, a very old Native of Khosen, said to me, speaking of one of these *shinusa* (the term by which these diviners are known) : "He used to travel all through the land, practising his art in the villages. He was able to describe minutely a goat which he had never seen ; or if somebody had buried something in a certain place to test him, he would go straight to the spot and say : 'Dig in the earth here, and you will find it.' Viguet also asserted that there were formerly true and trustworthy diviners in the Hlabi clans, and I myself heard trustworthy witnesses assert that a certain diviner who had been called into a village near Rikatla actually discovered some pounds sterling which had been hidden by their owner, who was no longer in the country.

4 & 5) A young man of the Mabota clan described to me two other methods of divination employed by his father, old Tumben (I. p. 531). One was called the *Small Mug* (shintjekwana). The diviner took a wooden mug in his left hand and held it by the handle. He placed in it an antelope's or goat's horn, and with his right hand he struck his right leg, putting the question to which he wanted an answer. He would say : "Is the matter really as I say?" If he had guessed rightly, the horn began to move to and fro ; if not, it remained quiet. Tumben also consulted the oracles by means of the *Small Calabash* (nhungubane). This calabash had some rags hanging from its neck, and a string was passed round it by which he held it dandling from the thumb of his left hand. He

lifted that hand and with his right hand struck his right hip, 787
meanwhile putting questions to the magical calabash, and calling it by the name he had given to it, viz., Nkoshi-wa-tihomu. To signify agreement, the calabash answered by means of the rags, which moved in all directions. Thereupon he said: "Keep quiet!" and the calabash remained quiet. — "He astonished us greatly, our father," added my informant! "His divinatory power came from the fact that certain incisions had been made in his hand and a special medicine inoculated into them. He had been taught by a man called Shitakule. Those who have not been initiated cannot consult the calabash; the rags do not move for them, neither does the horn in the small mug."

All these are primitive means of divination. We now come to the more elaborate, the famous divinatory bones. But before entering upon this most curious and interesting subject, I will describe the *Hakati*, which is based on the same ideas, but, being very much more simple, affords a useful introduction to the study of the bones.

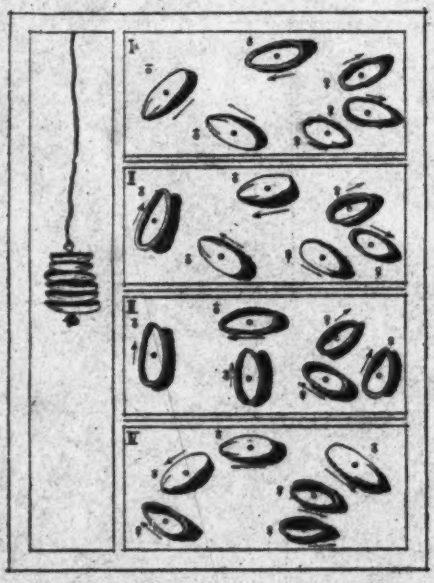
## III. *The Hakati.*

*Hakati* (yin-tin) is the name given to the stone of a fruit growing in the desert. This stone is oval-shaped, and is cut in two so as to form two pointed cupules with a small notch at each extremity. These extremities are both called *nomu*, mouth, though there is undoubtedly an anterior part, that which is pointed, and a posterior part, that which is blunt. Six of these cupules constitute a whole set. Three are male (♂), three female (♀), the former being distinguished merely by their larger size. In the set which I possess, some cupules have been marked with brands of different kinds. These marks do not appear to have any significance, except that they help the diviner to recognise such and such a shell at once. The six shells are pierced through in the middle so that they can be passed through a string and hung round the neck. (See the left side of the accompanying plate.)

The hakati is mostly employed in Hlengweland (Gaza), and seems to have been invented by the Ndjao tribe; the Ba-Ronga and

787 Thongas of other clans found it there during the hunting expeditions, and brought it back with them. It is used mostly by hunters to obtain directions and predictions in regard to their undertakings. Some also employ them for their domestic affairs (psa muti), but they are hardly sufficient for this purpose.

I have given an illustration of four cases which Spoon explained to me. The shells are thrown on a mat and two main things must be considered in the interpretation : the *direction* towards which they look and the *side* on which they fall, whether on their back, in the negative position, showing the concave side of the shell, or on their "legs," in the positive position, showing the convex side of the shell.



The Hakati.

No. 1. Two female shells on their backs looking to the right : the women have remained asleep in the village. One of them (ŏ shell on her legs) is working. The male shell on the top is the hunter who starts in the early morning, and pursues the elephant (the ŏ shell to the right) with his gun (the ŏ shell at the bottom)... The hunter is on his back : he has missed the elephant, which runs away, being on its legs! The signs are unfavourable!

No. 2. Same scene : Women asleep at home ; early morning. But here the hunter is on his legs and the elephant on its back : the beast will be killed! The signs are favourable!

No. 3. A case of disease. Everybody on their backs, males and females! A very bad case, with no hope! They hardly breathe!

No. 4. Another case of disease. On the left, three shells ; the shell in the middle is the patient ; that at the bottom, in the negative position, is his grief, his mouth wide open, moaning ; that on the top is a female

one, a woman who caused his disease, either by bewitching him, or because he had an unlawful connection with her. On the right three other shells : that at the top, the male one, is a friend going out of the village to fetch a remedy ; the two others, female, are two women opening their mouths, not to lament, but to laugh! They laugh at the man who was silly enough to expose himself to such a disgrace! 787

Those who practise the hakati art must also be initiated. They must bury their shells in the earth on the road, and when some one passes by on the path they unearth one shell, a male one if the passer-by be a man, a female one if it be a woman, (See later).

## IV. *The Divinatory bones (Bula).*

The hakati shells are regarded as more or less childish. The divinatory bones, on the contrary, constitute an admirable system of divination and play a considerable part in the life of the tribe. They are called *nhlolo* (yin-tin), which is their little name ; the great one is *bula*, evidently the same word as *ku bula*, to speak, i. e. the *Word* with a capital letter, the Revelation! I remember old Maselesele, a Nkuna diviner, telling me : "You Christians believe in your Bible. Our Bible is much better than yours! It is the divinatory bones!" 787 791

I was initiated into the knowledge of this wonderful art by many masters. The first was *Spoon* (I. p. 4) ; he was only a beginner, and his set of bones was not complete ; but he understood the rules perfectly well and all that he told me was confirmed by subsequent study. The second was *Maselesele*, the old Nkuna just referred to, a blind man who knew his bones by the mere touch, and had a true veneration for them. Unhappily for this poor Nkuna, his hut was burnt during the Sikororo war (I. p. 512) and the precious basket containing his bones was destroyed. — "Why did they not warn you of the fate they were about to undergo?," I asked Maselesele one day. "They might have ordered you to save them if they knew everything!" He could find no answer to this remark, but his faith was absolutely unshakable. Such was also the case with *Mankhelu*, who had

787 practised the art all his life, and was attached to his divinatory
791 bones by every fibre of his being. His set was the most complete I ever saw, containing as many as 64 objects. He even had two sets, one contained in a leathern basket, the other in a kind of net with small meshes ; the first he called the Father and the second the Son. The Father always remained at home, whilst he took the Son with him on his travels (1). I spent many hours with him, trying fully to understand his teaching, and he took great trouble to initiate me, concealing nothing from me, wondering sometimes at his own readiness to do so, and saying: "This thing I would not have told my own son." I had thus an opportunity of penetrating into the depths of the Bantu mind, which has perhaps invented nothing more elaborate or more typical than this divinatory system. Of course no sensible person would for a moment believe in the objective value of these practices. *Astragalomancy* has no more real value than Cheiromancy, Necromancy and all the other "mancies." But I am obliged to admit that the Thonga system is far more ingenious than any other that I have met with, and that it answers admirably to the wants of the Natives, comprehending all the elements of their life, and photographing them, so to speak, in such a manner that indications and directions can be obtained for all possible cases.

I have explained Spoon's art in detail in "Les Ba-Ronga." I will here confine myself to Mankhelu's revelations, which were more complete, as the old man was one of the masters of the diviner's profession as well as of that of the medicine-man.

### 1) The objects composing the set of divinatory bones.

787 These may be divided into two kinds : the *bones* properly
825 speaking, most of which are *astragalus bones*, and the various objects which are *not bones*. I shall now enumerate them, always

(1) I heard of another bone-thrower from Tembe who had also two baskets of bones; the first was called the basket of the chiefs, the second the basket of the subjects; the first was used in criminal cases to discover wizards: they were bones which "killed," and when they had accomplished their purpose, the diviner left them to rest for a whole week, using in the meantime the second basket. He then washed them, and they were ready to be used again.

giving the Native name of the object, as these names are technical and form quite a special vocabulary which seems to have an archaic character. 787 825

*a)* Amongst the bones some belong to *domestic animals*, goats and sheep, and consequently represent the *people dwelling in the village* :

Five astragalus of *he-goats* : 1) *Mbulwa*, the astragalus of an old castrated he-goat, the old man. 2) *Mbulwana* (diminutive of mbulwa), a he-goat not so old : men of ripe age. 3) *Shivimbiri*, a non-castrated he-goat : men in their prime. 4) *Shivimbidjana* (diminutive of the preceding), a non-castrated younger he-goat : young men of sixteen to twenty. 5) *Morisana wa timbuti shi-añwa-mafi*, the astragalus of a kid which is still a suckling : little boys, goatherds.

Six astragalus of she-goats : 1) *Gosha nkata wa mbulwa*, the old woman no longer capable of childbearing (1). 2) *Mihlangwana ya bukati, shinyuki sha timbuti*, a ripe woman still at the childbearing age, one who still smears her body with ochre. 3) *Ntibulana* (from tibula, to bring forth a child for the first time, I. p. 192) young married women, having had only one child. 4) *Nhombela*, a she-goat before parturition : girls practising the *gangisa* (I. p. 97), running about during the night but not yet married. 5) *Nhombedjana* and *nhombedjana yo-añwa-mafi*, little goat and suckling goat : girls still without sexual knowledge, or babies at the breast.

The goats, here as everywhere else, stand for the subjects. The *sheep* indicate the chiefs. There are five astragalus of sheep : 1) *Hamba, nuna wa noni*, a castrated ram, the chief and the old men of the royal family. 2) *Shikwela sha timpfu* or *Khuna ra*

(1) This, like most of the bones, has a long story. When Mankhelu was emprisoned by the old Boer Government for having strangled a pretended wizard (I. p. 444), and condemned to death, a diviner consulted the bones for him, and advised him to draw the image of a Native village on the earth and to pray every day to his ancestor-gods on his mother's side, asserting that they would deliver him, and that, when he returned home, he should sacrifice a goat to them. He added : "If people offer you a cow on the road, refuse." Mankhelu was indeed released, owing to petitions made in his favour, and, on his way home, everybody came to welcome him. In one village, the people wanted to give him a cow, but he refused it. When he reached his kraal, one of the wives of his maternal uncle appeared with twenty jars of beer, five baskets of mealies and three goats. He sacrificed one of these, and the astragalus became the *gos'a* of his set... He cannot look at it without a thrill of the heart!

787 *timpfu*, a non-castrated ram : the sons of the royal family, the
825 *evyeveis*! (bana ba-ku-psalwa). 3) Another *Shikwela*, astragalus of the ram sacrified during the Sikororo war, the one whose psanyi was used for the sprinkling of the Nkuna army ; it designates the enemy, and is watched with special attention when casting the bones in connection with military affairs. 4) *Noni wa timpfu*, an old sheep, the widow of the chief. 5) *Nhombela ya timpfu*, a young sheep, the girls of the royal family. As regards the wife of the chief, she is represented by the astragalus of the female mhala antelope.

787 In one of his sets of bones Mankhelu also had two objects
177 taken *from an ox*. One was an oval-shaped smooth bone, two
771 inches long, the other, one of its hoofs decorated on one of its three sides with triangular marks (See plate). Both represent the *Nkuna* tribe, whose totem is the buffalo. (Comp. I. p. 364.) But this is a custom borrowed from the Sutho-Pedis. I never saw bones corresponding to totems used in Thonga divination ; the idea of totem is altogether absent from the minds of the Thongas when not influenced by their Pedi neighbours.

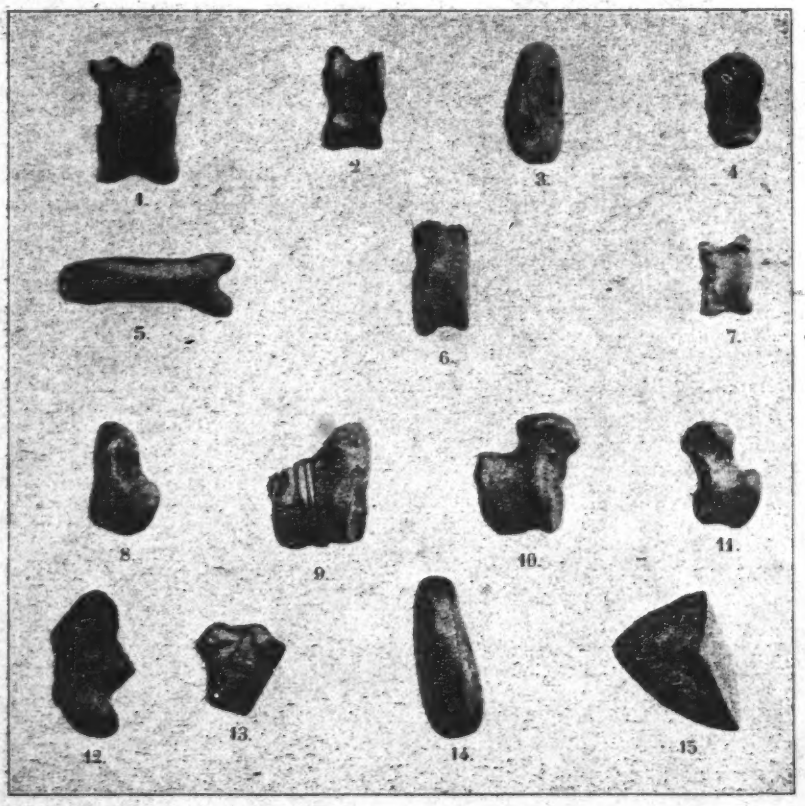
787 In addition to those of the domestic animals, there are a number
825 of astragalus, or other bones, taken from *wild animals*.

First from *antelopes* : the male *mhala*, *tsombe ra mhala*, means the chief, and the female mhala, his wife ; the male mhunti, *tsombe ra mhunti*, *mhunti ya matlhari*, the duiker of the weapons, means fighting men, and the female mhunti, called *mbiri*, means women of loose character : *mbiri ya ku tola, ñwashifamba ni mafura eku rimen*, the woman who smears herself with grease and ochre, even when she goes to her field (thus trying to attract the attention of men). The *nhlangu* (reed buck), wandering about during the night, means wizards, as these cast their spells by night. Mankhelu had only the astragalus of the female in his set. The *mbalala* antelope dwells in the forest ; it does not like to come out in the plains ; its astragalus therefore designates the chief who rests in his hut and does not expose himself to the toil and the heat of the day.

The astragalus of the *ngolube ya ku dya marambo, yi tjela mitshi yi ralarala, yi languta hi matlhelo*, the wild boar which eats bones,

787 which digs holes, which looks about on all sides, is the medicine-
825 man who searches for roots to prepare his drugs. The female wild pig is the medicine man's wife.

Three astragalus of a very different form come from *baboons*, *nuna wa mfene*, the male baboon, *nsati wa mfene*, the female



Objects specially worthy of note in Mankhelu's set of divinatory bones.

1. Mhalala antelope ♂. +. 2. Ram —. 3. Mhala antelope ♂ ×. 4. Reed buck ♀ :. 5. Phalanx of a Lion +. 6. Astragalus found in the dejecta of a hyena: Ancestor-god. 7. Malumbi +. 8. Ant-bear +. 9. Hyena +. 10. Leopard +. 11. Baboon +. 12. Kanye stone +. 13. Kanye: part of twig +. 14. Ox. 15. Ox hoof.

baboon, *nhombela ya mfene*, the young baboon. They symbolise the *village*, because baboons never move from their chosen spot. "You never see the ruins of their habitations; though men may

787 825 build in their neighbourhood, these apes do not leave permanently, you will see them coming back again next spring."

The following bones are asexual. There is only one of each kind in the set and it is not indicated whether it is male or female : the phalanx of a *lion* (ndjao), either male or female, taken either from the fore leg or from the hind leg, either on the left or on the right side. The lion is the chief of wild animals, so its phalanx represents the chief of the tribe, par excellence. It also designates White people, who are regarded as being as rich as kings! The astragalus of the *leopard*, *yingwe*, *shidya mafura*, the beast which eats fat and eats no grass, is also alone of its kind, the male only being taken ; it represents those who can choose their food, the rich, not the poor and wretched, "the chiefs and you White people," says Mankhelu! The *hyena*, *mhisi*, stands for the counsellors, the sycophants, the parasites ; they resemble the hyena, which follows the lion and the panther to eat the remains of their feasts, crunching the bones of a prey which it was not strong enough to kill! But the astragalus of the hyena also represents the wizards, because they eat the flesh of people whom they steal ; the ancestor-gods, because the hyena remains hidden in its hole during the day, like the psikwembu in their graves ; the chief himself, in as much as the chief also "eats" his subjects, and you cannot follow him and recover your property any more than you can a hyena!

The astragalus of the *ant-bear* (mhandjela), which digs the holes in which porcupines live, has also many meanings : the ancestor-gods, because they dwell in the earth and never come out in the day-time ; the power of death, because it digs the grave ; the chief himself, because ant-bears eat earth, and the chief also puts it to his mouth when sacrificing. He has the right to do so, when saying *tsu*, because the earth is his ; it belonged to his ancestors before him and he calls to them by its means (I. p. 405). Spoon used one of the claws of the ant-bear, instead of its astragalus.

A very curious bone is the one called *Shikwembu*, ancestor-god. It is a mhala astragalus found in the excrement of a hyena ; a most uncommon discovery, made by Mankhelu when on his way to Swaziland. The bone is worn down : it has evidently been bitten

by sharp teeth. I have explained (p. 376) how fittingly this bone was chosen to represent the spirits of the departed. They also have been swallowed by the earth, as the astragalus by the hyena, but return again to light and life in a new and divine existence! 787 825

The last astragalus of the set is the *malumbi*, the astragalus of the *shipene* or *mangulwe* antelope ; it is also asexual : *shirombe sha matiko, malumbyana wa tintibo, ntsinyarendjo*! the miserable of the land, the little antelope with white spots, the one which stops travellers (p. 347)! It plays a special part in the divinatory system, representing everything which is violent (leba) : the chief, the enemy, and especially the mysterious power of Heaven. For that reason it is watched with great attention by those who cast bones in connection with rain. When it falls in the "mild" position, it means that "the eye of Heaven is open, the knot is untied, the mouth of Heaven is open, rain will fall!" Then Mankhelu will make the offering (mhamba) for rain ; first the four leaves, then, if this is not sufficient, and if the chief requires it, the sacrifice of the black ram (p. 322, 316).

I include in the category of bones the pieces of *Tortoise shell*, *mfutju*, four of which are found in Mankhelu's basket : *mbulwa wa mfutju*, the adult male tortoise, *nsati, ntibula ya mfutju*, the young tortoise. According to the way in which they fall, these objects designate peace or misfortune for the village, prosperity or starvation (1).

*b)* The second category comprises the objects which are not bones or parts of the body of an animal. The most conspicuous are the *sea-shells* (djuma, dji-ma) belonging to two different genera : the *Oliva* shells, representing the attributes of the male, assagais, virile courage, etc., the *Cypraea* shells, corresponding to the attributes of the female, baskets, pots, pregnancy, births, oxen for lobola, etc. 787

There are besides two *kanye stones* of an abnormal form, one

(1) One day, when travelling through heavy rain, Mankhelu found a tortoise and obtained one of his divinatory bones from it. Soon afterwards he came upon an animal (I did not catch its name) which had just died, and ate it. Some time later he was offered a big he-goat in a village. So when the tortoise falls together with the astragalus of that animal, it is a sign that plenty of meat will be forthcoming!

787 found by a woman, the *female nkanye*, the other by a man, the *male nkanye*. These abnormal stones are very rare. They represent the vegetable world, especially *medicines, drugs*. They are supplemented by a little piece of nkanye twig, *nhombela ya nkanye*, the girl of nkanye, which was cut by a girl of Mankhelu's village on a certain day when he went to his "bakokwana" (to the relatives of his mother) to make a sacrifice. Being their uterine nephew, he had special rights and took the opportunity of enriching his divinatory set with their assistance.

Two *stones* are also to be found in the basket : the first is *ribye ra ngwenya* or *shimidjya sha ngwenya*, a stone found in the stomach of a crocodile ; these stones are generally of a dark colour, and frequently represent mourning, defilement (khumo, nsila) ; the second is *ribye ra dayiman*, the diamond stone, not a real diamond unhappily, but a stone with a striking design, found on the road, or in distant lands, by a traveller. It means luck, money, riches brought from foreign countries, gold which is extracted from the soil, in the same way as was this stone. I have shown in the accompanying plate (p. 545) the most curious and rare of the contents of Mankhelu's basket. In that of Maselesele there were also two pieces of white china, which represented the Whites ; another Nkuna diviner had chosen the shuttle of a sewing-machine for the same purpose. But these are new-comers in the basket, and are not met with in the old sets.

Comparing the explanations of the old Nkuna Mankhelu, who had been initiated long before and was an experienced diviner, with those of Spoon who belonged to the Coast clans, and was still a beginner in the art, I found a remarkable agreement between them. There are, however, some differences which can be explained by the wonderful imagination of the diviners. For instance, the wild pig indicated for Spoon the ancestor-gods, because they dwell in the sacred woods and dig the earth, and also old relatives who are on the eve of becoming gods ; the duiker meant the wizard because it also walks during the night, and the traveller because it rarely rests.

Though the bones have a fixed and definite meaning, they can also designate other objects if it is possible to establish a connection

between the animal and these objects, and we know how quick the Bantu mind is at discovering such relations between men and animals. 787

### 2) The Consultation of the divinatory bones and the rules for their interpretation.

I owe to a Tembe informant the following full description of the sequence of acts performed in a consultation of the divinatory bones. Suppose one of the inmates of the village to have been suddenly taken ill. The people who dwell in the same hut will at once go to the headman, even if it is night-time ; he will come, inspect the patient, and, having convinced himself of the seriousness of the case, he will start immediately for the diviner's village, not forgetting to take with him the necklace of the patient with his protective amulets (timfisa p. 471) ; if the man did not wear timfisa, the headman will replace these by some roots of a common plant, the tjeke, p. 14, or even of a common grass, the ntlangi ; these roots will be rubbed against his forehead and against his chest and will then be called his *ntjuleko*. Having reached the diviner's village, the consultant briefly states the object of his visit. A mat is unrolled and the ntjuleko placed on it, somewhere at the side ; the diviner takes all his bones in his hand, holds them firmly, and having chewed a little piece of a magic root, (1) spits on them and throws them on to the mat, saying with emphasis : "Mhamoo!" Those attending the consultation answer in the same tone : "Hizwaa! Si ya vuma!" — "Yes! We are agreed." This throwing is only preliminary. By spitting over his bones the diviner wishes to awaken them (pfusha) to make them see (hanyanyisa). He then passes them to the consultant, who will himself throw them throughout the whole consultation, the diviner only holding his little stick and pointing to them in order to explain their significance. 787 755 791

In the first place the consultant takes the necklace of the patient 787 755

(1) Manthelu used for this purpose the bulb of a Liliacea called shifungulu, which has an agreeable scent.

787 or the above-mentioned roots, and rubs three or four bones against
755 them. These objects having been in close contact with the patient and containing his "nsila," the exudation of his body, establish a connection between him and the bones. The bones will then "know him" and throughout the operation these astragalus, which have been, so to speak, anointed with the "nsila" of the patient, will be watched with special interest; if they are "doubtful," hesitating (gome), the diviner will also have doubts about the revelations made by the others (1).

The consultant throws the bones for the first time, the diviner having asked: "What about the patient?" If the bones fall in a manner which corresponds to the state of the patient, all is well. The diviner will show with his stick that this correspondence exists. It is a proof that the bones have really awakened and are disposed to speak. The question is then put a second time in order that the first reply may be confirmed.

The way is now open for further inquiries; in the first place, what is the cause of the disease? Does it come from the ancestor-gods? From a male ancestor-god? From one on the paternal side? From great-grandfather so and so? From great-grandmother so and so? When the bones answer in the negative, another name is tried, and so the consultation proceeds by a process of elimination; the names of deceased great-uncles, parents, uncles, even of a son who may have died quite young are pronounced successively. If the ancestor-god who caused the disease is not found in the paternal line, then the same questions are put regarding the maternal ancestors, the bakokwana, the diviner himself suggesting to the consultant the names which are to be mentioned. It may be that the bones, which are often thrown two or three times for each name, will designate one of the ancestors. Then begins another series of questions. Why is the god angry? Is it because the patient has neglected his duties towards him? What does he ask for in order that he may be appeased? Goat's flesh? Clothing? Beer? Mealies? Who shall bring (tamela)

(1) If the diviner or his client consults for himself, he rubs these bones against his own forehead and his chest before throwing them on to the mat, and the connection is thus established.

787 the offering? The headman? An adult? A child? A certain
755 relation who is on bad terms with the patient and has sworn never to enter his village again? If the latter is designated he will have to come, after having first made the offering of reconciliation (described p. 398). The bones must likewise designate the person who will have to stab the victim, as also the person who will say tsu and pronounce the prayer. This may be a baby, and, in

Consulting the bones. Phot. A. Burd.

that case, his father will take him in his arms and pray instead of him. Women are often designated, as we saw on p. 411.

But it may happen that the bones do not agree that the disease has been caused by an ancestor-god at all. The consultation then takes another turn. Was it caused by a wizard? By a witch? Is it so and so? Or so and so? If no affirmative answer is given there then remains still another alternative. Has the patient been contaminated by the defilement of the bush (the dust of conta-

787 minated huts thrown down at crossroads) or of the footprints
755 (mitila, p. 478)?

Such is the procedure followed in a consultation regarding disease. It will be modified according to circumstances, when the advice of the bones is asked for in other difficulties.

If from the beginning there is no correspondance whatever between the manner in which the bones have fallen and the case for which they are consulted, if they "refuse to speak," the diviner will perhaps roll up his mat and leave the hut ; he will then try to throw the bones on the square, or in the bush, or behind the hut, and the consultation will be continued there till a clear answer is given.

787 In order to see if the bones have really consented to speak, three or four things are specially examined : the *side* on which the bones have fallen, the *direction* towards which they look, their *disposition* or the position they have taken in regard to each other, and the *relation* of the male and the female bones towards each other, viz., are all the male or all the female bones on the same side? Each object can fall on two sides, all of them having a *convex* and a *concave* side. If they fall so as to show the convex side (bukhatsha position), they are said *to be full* (ku tala), or *to stand on their legs* and to *march forward* (ku famba) ; this is the *positive side*, which I indicate by + ; if they fall showing their concave side (lwandla position) they are *empty* (ku pshya, image of a lake which has dried up), or lie *on their back* : this is the *negative position* which I indicate by —. In the first case, the person or principal represented by the bones is happy (tjaka), at peace (rula), active, marching, powerful ; in the second he is tired (karala), ashamed (tingana), powerless, dying (fa). Astragalus of goats, and sheep on their convex side, show that the inhabitants of the village, or the chief, are in good health and good spirits, working, succeeding ; if on their concave side, they show that those persons are lying ill or dying. On the other hand, the astragalus of the ant-bear in the positive position indicates that the digger is digging a grave, that the ancestor-gods are awake and probably ready to punish, etc. So it would not be correct to call the convex the favourable, and the concave the unfavourable side. The first is the *active*

787 position, the second the *passive* one. Most of the astragalus may fall not only on these two principal sides, but also on the right or on the left side. The right side is called *ntjumba*, and is somewhat convex. Mankhelu explained to me its meaning by himself imitating the position (See the accompanying plate). He sits with his shield protecting him, with *his chest full*, ready to

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Phot. H. A. Junod

Mankhelu imitating the "ntjumba" position.

787 spit (like a cat), and his assagay lifted ready to be thrown ; this is the position of hostility, of anger. The left side is called *dzuuri*, or *minkono*, viz., the elbows ; it is somewhat concave. It is the position of a man half leaning on his elbows, *his chest empty*, enjoying life and not threatening others, the assagay being turned towards the soil (See the next plate). These two positions, which I represent by ×, the sign of multiplication, for *ntjumba*, and :, the sign of division, for *minkono*, are rarely met with. Spoon knew nothing of them. They belong to a more elaborate art. In fact

787 the two first positions are by far the most common. Let us see what is the meaning of some of the divinatory objects in these different positions :

Baboon +, the village is firm ; no ruins! Baboon —, the village is destroyed ; disease or death ; that which you eat does not remain inside : dysentery.

Ancestor-god +, the gods are happy and thankful. Ancestor-

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Phot. H. A. Junod.

Mankhelu imitating the "ninkomo" position.

787 god —, they sleep ; there is nothing to fear ; ×, they are angry, they speak in a low voice ; : , they speak mildly.

Kanye +, the drugs have their eyes open (the two kernels inside the nkanye stone have been removed, and it appears to have two eyes, which are visible in the positive position and hidden in the negative) ; the drugs help, cure. Kanye —, the eyes of the drugs are closed ; the medicine-man will not succeed.

Crocodile stone +, the country is at peace, the village is happy,

787 no misfortune. Crocodile stone —, the crocodile is hidden in the water, it waits for you and will kill you : starvation, death, defilement.

Tortoise-shells +, the village is smeared with ochre ; every one perspires agreeably, walking slowly as tortoises do when they come out to enjoy the rain, and eat grass. People drink beer, and have plenty to eat. Tortoise-shell —, misfortune in the village ; everything looks black (the concave side of the tortoise-shell is rough and more or less black). Nothing is cared for on the square ; the grass grows there ; disorder, death, starvation. The tortoises are hidden in their holes.

Female sea-shells +, the rivers are full ; pregnancy takes its normal course ; the wealth which comes by the sea in the steamers is well protected. Female sea-shells —, the rivers are empty ; birth is imminent, either favourable or otherwise ; there has been a wreck at sea, and you will find riches on the shore!

Male sea-shells +, the assagais are in good condition ; men succeed in their undertakings. Male sea-shells —, the assagais are broken ; the army will be defeated.

Sea-shells in the negative position, showing their opening, also mean a mouth open to laugh or to cry : if all are in this position, it means lamentation, because when all the people open their mouths together, it is always to lament ; when two or three only show their teeth, it means laughter, as people never laugh all together, but only a few at a time!

While the side on which the bones fall must be considered before all else in the interpretation, the *direction* in which they look is also very important, as it reveals the intentions and movements of all the personages represented ; their *arrangement* shows the relation between these persons ; moreover if all, or most, of the astragalus of the same sex fall in the same position, this is a sign to be particularly noted for the following reason. If a woman is ill and you wish to receive directions as to what to do for her, you cast the bones ; if the she-goat falls on the negative side, this proves that the Word is speaking; but if all the other feminine astragalus show their concave side also then no doubt remains ; the Word is really speaking ; a valuable confirmation has been given!

### 3) Some cases of astragalomancy.

787 My informants explained to me a certain number of cases which will illustrate the system of astragalomancy better than anything else. I have published illustrations of seven of these in an article in the *Bulletin IX of the Society of Geography of Neuchâtel.* They were given to me by Spoon. I shall here re-publish one of them, the case of the sick mother, and two new ones, much more complex, which I owe to Mankhelu.

These three cases will be sufficient to illustrate the divinatory system. Let me give, as a preliminary, the two following instances :

*Prediction of rain* : Ram × and Mhala ×, the chief is full of confidence ; the He-goats, the headmen are glad and thankful ; Mbalala +, the chief is happy ; it will be wet in the forest! Tortoises —, there is black everywhere ; the soil is dark on account of the rain. Olivae +, all the huts are closed because nobody dares to go out lest he be soaked! Baboons +, the village will have plenty to eat. If Baboon were —, the rain would be accompanied by bad winds, which would break down the mealies and bring starvation.

*The place where the timbhovela* (the dirt which falls from the body of a convalescent during the hondlola rite, p. 471) *must be thrown.* Here the diviner proceeds by questions, in order to obtain the directions required. He asks : "In the river?" and throws the bones ; if the astragalus of the patient falls in the + position, Male Tortoise also, while the female astragalus are on their elbows, playing, smiling ; if the Lion is — (the bad bloods have been overcome) ; if Hyena is — (the disease which kills is vanquished), if the Ant-bear is — (the gods sleep), and the female Tortoises are +, meaning that women will soon be able to smear their bodies with ochre, then the answer is : yes. If this is not the case, he asks : "Into an ants'nest?" and again throws the bones, until the answer is positive.

The chiefs always consult the bones in order to know if the time has come *to sow the seeds* of pumpkins and millet. If all the Sea-Shells fall showing their mouths (yahlama), and the astragalus of the ram and ewe are in the + position, then you may sow.

See, p. 483, how the bones are consulted in order to obtain directions *in the rites of exorcism*, and, p. 525, how they help to *discover the wizards.*

Reproduced from "Les Ba Ronga."

The case of the sick mother.

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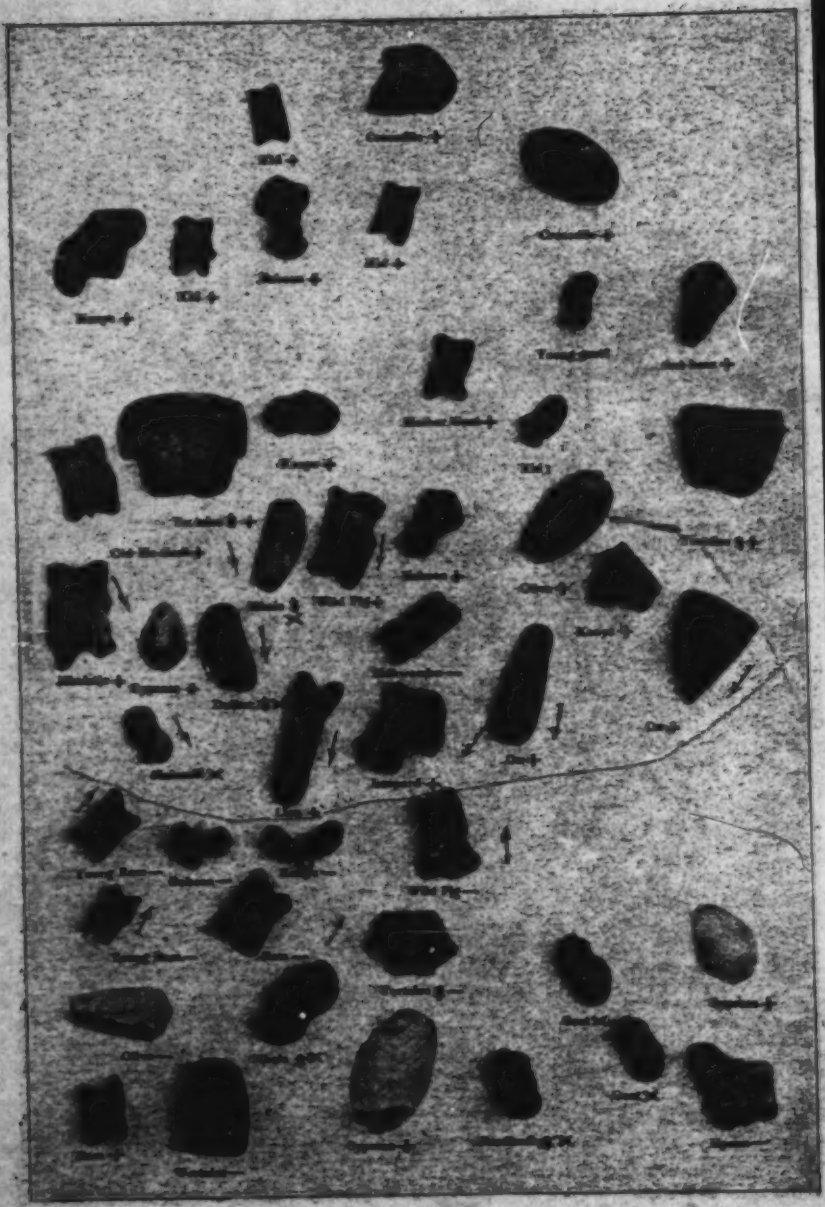

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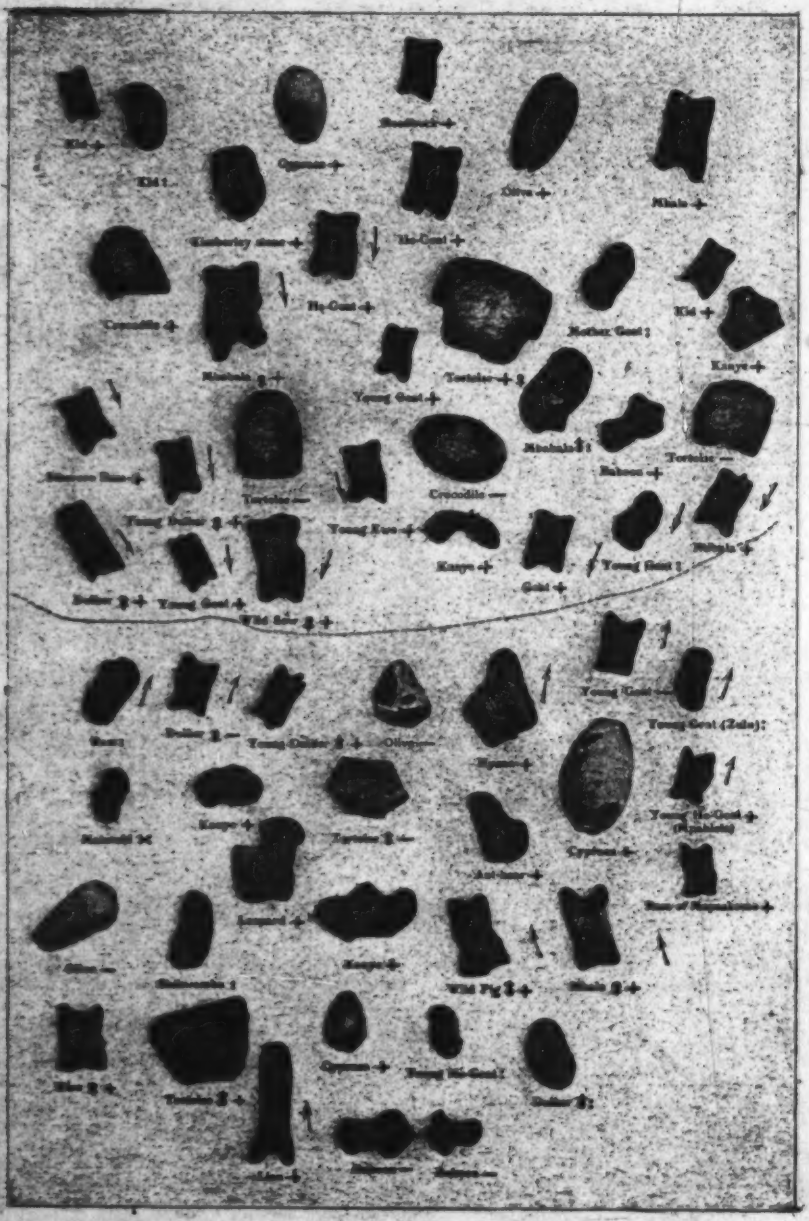

(One third of natural size).

Prophecy of a Migration.

a) *The case of the sick mother* (p. 557).

787 In the centre we see *She-Goat* —; the mother is sick, on her back!
755 Above, the red Antelope, Malumbi + and below, Oliva +, are looking towards her ; these are the malignant influences which have thrown her into this state. *Cypraea* — wide-open, on her left, shows that she is suffering from dysentery! On the extreme left we see *Weaned Kid* + and *Young Goat* + on their legs, walking ; they are going towards *He-goat*, the father, who is also +, not quite discouraged, and pointing toward the *kanye*, the medicine by which he hopes to cure his wife. By so doing he keeps in check *Wild Sow* — the ancestor-god, who is thus prevented from adding his hostile influence to those already active. Near him is *Kid* — a young boy on his back, quite in despair, who keeps close to his mother. The father, having spoken with his children, starts for the bush, following the three arrows shown at the bottom of the plate. On the right, we see *Gazelle, Duiker* + ; this is he again returning from his walk as a traveller (the duiker, being always on his legs, often represents travellers). He holds the drug he has dug up *(Kanye —)*. But this kanye stone is on the bad side ; itwas difficult to find the roots, which penetrated into the soil, as do the two protuberances of the stone! Moreover two *Crocodiles' stones* speak of death, and the little *Oliva* + looks at the father in a hostile manner. The bones of the upper part, on the right, contain no encouragement whatever. *Wild Pig* + is an old relative coming to pay a visit to the sick woman ; he is accompanied by a girl, *Young She-Goat*, below him, who also goes towards the village with lamentations, shown by the open *Cypraea* in front of her ; on the top, *Ant-bear* + comes to dig the grave! Near him *Duiker* — is on its back, without strength, whilst *Tortoise* —, in the left hand corner, is also lying on her back ; no agreeable perspiration, no peace, no happiness.

The bones here give a triple revelation ; they depict the actual position, show its cause, and indicate its course and the remedy ; the disease is serious, but there is ground for hope if the father finds the right drug. If the astragalus of the He-Goat had been on its back, and that of the Wild Sow on its legs, directed against the patient, the case would have been hopeless.

b) *The battle of Moudi* (p. 558).

On the 6th of November, 1901, when the hostile army of Sikororo was signalled (I. p. 513), Mankhelu, seized with a terrible dread, consulted his bones. The Word spoke with such precision that one would be tempted to believe that the message was touched up post eventum. But Mankhelu asserts that many witnesses were present and testify to the prophecy of the victory which occurred the following day. 787

The bones fell in two lots, first, those on the upper two thirds of the plate, on the side of the diviner, and consequently representing his own army : complete victory! Second, those in the lower third of the plate, representing the enemy : absolute rout! I have separated these two parts with dots. Let us look at the lower part first. Three Rams on their backs : the chiefs killed ; the Ram is Rios, the acting chief of the Sikororo clan, the great enemy. Yesterday a ram was sacrificed to ask the gods to give victory. Its astragalus was taken and added to the other bones, to represent Rios ; here he is, dead on the battle-field! Close by, Wild Pig and Kanye are also on their backs : their medicine-man has been unable to protect them. Baboon is —, the village of Sikororo is destroyed! Tortoises —, no peace in that village, they are black! No resplendent ochre, but darkness and misfortune for them! Female Mhala ×, the women have their chests full of grief ; they cry. See all the female astragalus on their backs, or on their sides, in dreadful misfortune. Oliva —, the weapons broken, powerless. Two Cyprea +, no laughter, faces dark! Hyena —, Titus, a Pedi Christian who acted as counsellor to the chief, the sycophant of Rios, has been killed. See, in the left corner, at the bottom, Ram +. This is old Sikororo, the chief who dwelt in the mountains and had not given his consent to the treacherous attack. He is alone, unaware of what has been done by Rios, the chief regent. The Nkunas will not interfere with the good old man.

On the Nkuna side, Lion and Malumbi are in the foreground ; the one + the other ×, viz. full of courage : they represent the superior powers : you, Ba-Moneri (the missionaries), who helped us in that terrible hour! Leopard +, the sons of the chief are also running furiously towards the enemy. Ox +, the totem of the Nkuna clan is in good order ; he is safe. Shikwembu sleeps ; the ancestor-gods are not anxious about us ; they rest peacefully. Wild Pig +, the medicine-man who sprinkled the army is happy ; all his drugs (Kanye +) are

787 acting, they have their eyes open. Look behind Malumbi ; all the troops of warriors, Mhunti, Mhala, are in the ntjumba position, in high spirits, and their arms (Oliva +) are all strong and victorious ; the guns will not miss fire. Behind them, the kids and young goats, little boys and girls, are playing, quietly leaning on their elbows (minkono position). The chief (Mbabala +) who remained at home, is happy, as is also the old He-goat, his uncle, who did not take part in the battle. Ant-bear +, the ancestor-god of the village, is also quiet ; the two Tortoises + warm themselves in the rays of the sun ; the women still smear their bodies with fat and ochre!

The battle of the 6th of November, 1901, was a great event for the Nkuna tribe. For me it proved a wonderful opportunity of witnessing some of the most curious customs of the tribe. I owe to it this consultation, the narrative of Mankhelu's mhamba (p. 418) and the knowledge of many military rites (I. p. 476).

c) *Prophecy of a Migration* (p. 559).

On the day of the renewal of his drugs, which was a feast for his whole village (p. 454), Mankhelu threw his bones, which promised marvellous things : a throng of distinguished visitors were about to come and make their submission to him and increase his power ; princes, rich people laden with wealth! As Mankhelu was residing on the Mission farm, he said to me one day : "Be happy, my missionary, you will have new tenants who will increase the value of your farm! They are preparing their loads now... My god, Shiluvane, has revealed this to me. They will come before the tilling season begins. If they do not come I will give you an ox!" Some months later, no one having appeared on the horizon, I inquired from my old friend as to my ox. With a good-natured laugh he said : "Look! I will show you how the bones lied to me," and he placed his sixty-two bones on the mat as they had fallen on that day.

Once more we have the two halves, which I have separated by the dotted line ; in the lower part the migrating clan arriving, in the upper, Mankhelu's village welcoming it. Two Baboons —, the village is ruined, they leave it ; their chiefs are Lion, who is +, in good health, and Ram : laughing, smiling, playing. Malumbi is ×; his chest is full, because he is running away ; he is a powerful man, but he is out of breath. Near Ram we have his daughter Duiker ♀ on her back : he offers her in

marriage. She will even give us a child (young male Duiker near her!) The child will be a boy, as he is surrounded by Tortoise ♂ and the male shell Oliva. These chiefs may have been dispossessed of their own country ; this is shown by the Ram of Mapsakomo ; this astragalus was taken after a sacrifice made at the death of Mapsakomo, the rival of Muhlaba, who died of anger when his right to the chieftainship of the Nkuna clan was forfeited (I. p. 412). Young He-Goat, in front of him, also proves the foreign origin of the visitors ; it is an astragalus which Mankhelu obtained in the Mpahlela district, South of the Oliphant. Young goat, playing, indicates the same thing, its astragalus having come from Swaziland. In front of her is another Young goat — ; this is a girl who is offered to us in marriage, perhaps a second, perhaps the same as Duiker ♀ ; at any rate the prediction is confirmed. This Young goat is called that of *ringela bovumba*, because its astragalus has been taken from the animal sacrificed in the rite of removing the malediction of bovumba (I. p. 194). It may perhaps indicate that the misfortune of these noble strangers will also be removed when they come and dwell with us! Hyena is in the + position : they are cunning people ; nobody will dare to run after them! They keep firm hold of what they possess or have stolen! Leopard + : they are rich people, living on fat and flesh. The two Cypraea +, indicate the sea and the wealth brought into the country by the steamers, which they carry with them! One might think that they were White people! Wild Pig +, they have their medicine-man and their drugs (Kanye +) ; their children (young He-goat : and Duiker ♂) play and dance! Their women (Mhala + Ewe +) are covered with ochre as shown by Tortoise +. Their gods, Shikwembu and Ant-bear +, are with them and have "given them the road" ; they are pointing in the same direction. "Look at Ewe, the old woman, the widow of the chief! What has she hanging round her neck? — Oliva, a crocodile-tooth, an amulet well smeared with protective drugs?" Such is the procession of the new-comers. 787

In the upper half, we see the village of Mankhelu welcoming the new-comers ; the young children and the women run in front (Duiker ♀+, Young Duiker +, Young Goats + and Young Ewe +, Ntibula +) ; they are curious, they are anxious to see who the visitors are. Behind them come the old people : Mbabala ♀+, the wife of the chief ; the chief himself, Muhlaba, Mbabala ♂:, is on his elbows, quiet and smiling, in no way fearing this peaceful invasion, whilst his mother, Mother-Goat, comes also, dancing. Baboon + ; does not this show that the village is secure? Mankhelu himself is represented by three bones : Ram +

787 and two He-Goats +. He comes with dignity to meet the arrivals. Behind, in the village itself (at the top of the plate), boys (kids) play beneath the shade of the trees (kanye); two women are killing each other's lice! i. e. Reedbuck and Cypraea, the female sea-shell! etc. One of the Tortoises is —, showing its black side. But this is not a sign of disease or defilement; the village has been cleaned, the black soil is visible everywhere because it has been well swept and the huts also have been smeared afresh. The black colour also indicates that the bush has been burnt; it prophesies the time when these strangers will come, when the bush-fire has reduced all the grass to ashes, in September or October, at the end of the winter The Tortoise in front of He-Goat is +; this is the face of Mankhelu, radiant with joy. "Mahlwen ka mbulwa ku nyuka!" — "on the face of the old man there is sweet perspiration." His drugs are all right (kanye +, means both drugs and shade). Crocodile is —, the rivers are low; this confirms the forecast of the time of the arrival. The Kimberley stone is +; the earth is solid, firm. Oliva +, the sky is clear, we are happy! When we rise in the morning we look towards the East! etc.

—"Wonderful!" said I to Mankhelu. "Only they did not come!" — "Never mind," he answered. — "Then the bones have deceived you!" — "Not at all! If it is not this year, it will be next year! Moreover, we diviners are not afraid of being told that our bones lie. When, later on, our prophecies are fulfilled, then people wonder! They are convinced. And after all, if the Word lies, it is not my fault!" — "How is that?" — "We do not put our ideas into them (a hi ti rumeteli); we merely interpret them; it is they who speak!" — "Then they have a power in themselves?" — "No! the power is in the chest of the diviner." Such was the conversation with which the demonstration closed. I shall return to it presently.

### 4) The initiation of the diviners.

791 Astragalomancy is not an esoteric art; every one in the tribe knows the bones, and their significance, and all the men attend the consultations and help in the interpretation. However, every one is not a diviner and an initiation is necessary to become a fully qualified practitioner. If a young man feels that he has the qualities of perspicuity and shrewdness necessary for the practice of the art, he begins by collecting the astragalus one after

791 than is at present the case. It may be so, as the hondlola by which they pass from apprenticeship to mastership is a true rite of integration, by which they enter upon a new condition and acquire a special position. At every new moon henceforth they will have to wash their bones ritually in order to remove the defilement of the preceding month, after which they will smear them with psanyi.

When a diviner finds that he is not successful in his forecasts, he consults another member of the fraternity, who tells him to offer such and such a victim to an ancestor-god who was himself a bone-thrower, and who is supposed to have given the bones to his unsuccessful descendant. The spirit of interpretation of the deceased will then enter into the supplicant.

In order to attract customers, Mankhelu kept a little pellet of black grease amongst his bones. When he arrived at a place to practise his art, he took a little of this grease and placed it on a glowing cinder, arranging the bones all round, and the smoke which rose from the fat acted as a summons to the people. "So I saw one coming from this direction with an ox, another from another direction with a goat, and made good profit!"

Women may also become bone-throwers, but this is a rare occurrence.

### 5) The importance of the divinatory bones.

787 791 From all the foregoing information it may easily be gathered that the art of bone-throwing is by no means child's play, nor mere quackery by which astute sooth-sayers deceive their credulous fellows. It is a true art which the diviners practise *in all sincerity*, themselves believing that they receive objective revelations through its means. This sincerity is attested by many proofs.

1) The fact, already mentioned, that it is not a secret, esoteric art, but that all know its rules and take part in the interpretation.

2) The confidence which diviners have in the power of their bones, and the strong attachment which they profess for their divinatory basket (1). Each of their astragalus bears a name which reminds them

(1) The conversation, just referred to, which I had with Mankhelu after his explanation of the unfulfilled prophecy, is very striking in this respect. It concluded as follows : — "Mankhelu," I said to him, "you see that your bones deceive you! They

787 of the person who gave it to them, the circumstances in which it was
791 found, and some of the triumphs of their career. Their whole life is connected with these bones, which they truly love and to which they are bound by all the fibres of their hearts!

Of course diviners are *shrewd*! Their interpretation does not proceed from mathematic evidence, but from their extraordinary powers of imagination. Tortoise in the negative position may at the same time mean black earth, death, defilement, a well-swept village, the burnt bush, according to the requirements of the case ; but this is fair play and everyone approves of their ingenuity ; it is not a conscious attempt to deceive. It is evident that the predictions often remain unfulfilled, as in the case of Mankhelu's prophecy. Or the exact reverse of the forecast happens. One of my evangelists, Filipi Mabemane, when still a heathen, went to consult a Matjolo diviner regarding the birth of a child which was shortly to take place. "It will be a boy, and he will live" was the answer. Actually, it was a girl and she died! So many people are more or less sceptical and say : "Tinhlolo i ntlhangana na pso!" — "The bones tell the truth when by chance it so happens!" However their faith is not impaired for long! The anxiety to know the future is so great that they consult anew, but not the same diviner. People say : "Psa mu hlula," — "He has been overcome," and go to another! Qualified doctors sometimes experience similar treatment even amongst the Whites! Viguet once quarelled with a bone-thrower. The man of art contended that he always told the truth. "What did you tell me?" said Viguet. "You told me that I should get plenty of oxen and goats. Where are they? And why did you not tell me : 'Hanya, hanya, hanya... Live, live, live... there will come a day when something will happen and we shall quarrel!' " But the sceptics are rare. Faith in the bones is blind, but it is great!

How is this confidence, which both diviners and their customers have in the divinatory bones, to be explained?

are old, dry, dead things which cannot help you ! Come to the light of the true Revelation of Jesus Christ." — "You are right, Moneri," answered my friend. "I am old! I cannot use my bones any more, as I no longer travel for trade or feasting ! I shall have to come to the Church by and by." — "If that is so, let me have your basket ; it interests me very much. I will pay for it." — "He ! Moneri ! Impossible !" — "Why ? At any rate sell me the Son, if you wish to keep the Father !" — "No ! I want to keep the Son." — "Then give me the Father !" — "Never !" said he quite scandalised. — "You see that your heart is still in it, old chap !" — "Yes. When a child has dysentery, can I leave it so ? Must I not consult the bones to know what drug to give ?..." I did not succeed that day in buying either Son or Father. However, the diviner died some years later and his heirs consented to sell me one of his sets, which is now in my possession.

787 791 Does it come from a *religious belief*? It is not easy to say definitely to what extent the divinatory art rests on religion. On the one hand, the power of interpretation of the bones comes from the ancestor-gods who were bone-throwers themselves, and they are invoked to give or to revive this power. Mankhelu even told me that the prophecy of the arrival of the strangers had been inspired in him by his deceased father Shiluvane. But the Bula, the Word, is not generally looked on as being the utterance of the ancestor-gods. The bones are, in a certain sense, *superior to the gods* whose intentions they disclose. The Bula is the revelation of a more or less impersonal power, independent of the gods.

787 789 791 It is undeniable that the divinatory art is *essentially magical*; it rests on those universal axioms of primitive mentality which are deeply engrained in the Bantu mind (p. 368) and this is sufficient to account for the indisputable value which it possesses in the eyes of the Thongas. Like replaces like. By virtue of mere external similarity one object can signify another. Thus human beings are represented by animals which resemble them in a certain point. The reedbuck which wanders during the night stands for the wizards who do the same; the hyena, which eats the remains of the lion's feast, is the parasite who follows the chief, etc. Thus there are representative and represented objects. But like also acts on like: in some mysterious way the fate of the representative object will be the fate of the object represented. There is no doubt that diviners sometimes claim not only the power to form a diagnosis, to discover causes and give advice, but to influence the course of events themselves and determinate certain results. Mankhelu believed that he had contributed to the defeat of the Sikororo tribe when the bones so vividly depicted the rout of their army. If imitative magic controls the divinatory art, the part played by communionist magic is equally great. The part represents the whole. The astragalus, which is but a small bone, represents the whole body, and its fate prophecies the fate of the entire animal or person represented by it. The Native mind has a much profounder conception of the unity of the animal and human worlds than we have. Spoon once said to me mysteriously: "The astragalus of the goat truly represents the people of the village, because these animals live in the village; they know us, they know what is in us." Observe also how the consultant takes the amulets of the patient and rubs them against the bones in order that they may be able to speak the truth about him. These amulets contain the nails and hair of the patient if they have been tied round his neck in the hondlola ceremony. Moreover they are covered with his "nsila," the exudation of his body,

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga



the material representation of his personality. By this contact the patient has in a way become a part of the "complexus Bula" and what happens to the bones will also happen to him ; what is said by the bones will henceforth apply directly to him. This magic conception of Nature is probably the profound and secret reason why the diviners believe so firmly in their art.

On the other hand, this art is so perfect that bone-throwers can derive very great satisfaction from the practice of it. It must be born in mind that, in fact, all the elements of Native life are represented by the objects contained in the basket of divinatory bones. It is a resumé of their whole social order, of all their institutions, and the bones, when they fall, provide them with an instantaneous picture of all that may befall them. This system is so elaborate that I do not hesitate to say that, together with their language, their folklore, their lobola customs and their burial rites, it is the product of their psychic life which shows most intelligence. If the premises of divination are accepted, astragalomancy seems to me vastly superior to cheiromancy and all the other systems which have been invented by us. It is also superior to the divination by four tablets of ivory or wood practised by a certain number of South African tribes, a description of which will be found in Appendix VI (1).

But if this system of divination is a proof of great intelligence, it must be confessed that *its results*, as shown in the psychic life of the tribe,

(1) There are some grounds for thinking that divination by astragalus bones is very old in the history of mankind. The Greeks practised *astragalomancy*. In a paper to which I shall refer in App. VI, the Rev. N. Roberts mentions the temple of Dodone, in which, according to Cicero, there was a large brass basin with the statue of a man upon it, and this man held in his hands a whip with three straps from which hung small astragalus bones. When these bones were set in motion by the wind, they struck against the basin and the sounds thus produced had a prophetic character. This was astragalomancy, but of a very different kind from that just described. Aristotle makes frequent allusions to the astragalus bone and says, inter alia, that one of its sides, named *coon*, represents the figure 6 ; another, named *chion*, the figure 1, etc. This shows that in his time the astragalus bone was already identified with the dice. The dice, also called *αστραγαλος* in Greek is simply an astragalus bone whose sides have been cut so as to form a perfect cube. We find traces of the use of the astragalus even further back in the past. Angelo Mosso, quoted by the same author, asserts that he found many astragalus in Italy, where they were used in connection with primitive religion as far back as the neolithic period. The discovery in the lake of Neuchâtel of a collection of more than thirty astragalus in the lake dwellers' station of Auvernier may be a proof that these bones did in truth play a part in the customs of primitive humanity. If this is so, then the Bantus have preserved the astragalus as they did the wooden pillow of the old Egyptians, the ancestrolatry of the Mousterians and the "mbaya" (p. 93) of the Libyans. The astragalus is still employed in play to represent cattle by Swiss children in the Canton of Valais, and I am told that the South African Boers have the same custom, and call these bones dol-osse.

787 are most *deplorable*. These practices kill in ovo any serious attempt at
155 the use of reason or experience in practical life. Native doctors might
182 have arrived at a useful and beneficent knowledge of the medicinal virtues of vegetables, if they had studied them carefully. But why should they trouble themselves with study, when a single cast of the bones at once tells them what root must be taken to cure the disease? (Compare my account of diagnosis, p. 475). Further, the bones annihilate the moral conscience, or, at any rate, they prevent any healthy development of this precious faculty. When overtaken by misfortune the Bantu might be moved to introspection to review his conduct, and see what wrong actions he had committed. From this self-examination, moral progress might result. But such trouble is useless! The bones are thrown. They reveal that misfortune was caused by such and such spiritual influences, wizards, gods, defilement, Heaven, that it must be combated by such and such means, — a drug, or a packet of drugs, a victim, male or female, offered by so and so, in such and such a manner. This is all-sufficient and the conscience remains dormant (1) as does the reason. I am convinced that, however high the degree of astuteness engendered by the divinatory bones may be, they have been extremely detrimental to the intellectual and moral welfare of the Natives.

This leads us to our last chapter, in which the questions of Taboo and Morality will be considered.

(1) Wishing to know if the bones were sometimes used to obtain moral guidance, I once asked Mankhelu: "As you throw your bones on every occasion, would you consult them when going to a beer party? There might be trouble, perhaps quarrels, blows... If you wish to avoid these would the bones tell you to abstain from the party?" He laughed heartily. "No!" said he. "If I saw that the men were drinking too much I should leave before they were quite drunk." I have some doubts if he would really have done so, but it remains clear that the bones have nothing to do with morality!